

28 March 2024

## **Quality Assurance – use of simulated practice, reflective hours and satellite sites**

Dear Colleague,

As we progress from approving programmes against the new standards into routine monitoring, we wanted to write to you with some key themes that we have identified coming out of the most recent monitoring visits. This is to help share key learning whilst also seeking assurance from other institutions of their own provision. Attached to this letter we have included a dedicated exceptional reporting form that we require all Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) to complete by 26 April 2024.

### Use of simulated practice in **Nursing** programmes

Some AEIs have made us aware that they did not return their programmes to their approved provision of simulated practice hours when the emergency and recovery standards were removed as required.

We withdrew the Emergency Standards on 30 September 2021. The majority of our Recovery Standards were withdrawn on 30 September 2022, with the remainder withdrawn in January 2023 when Council approved the changes to our standards and increased use of simulated practice (where approved through a major modification). All programmes should therefore have returned to the provision approved during your approval event unless a subsequent major modification has been undertaken OR the AEI was approved to deliver RN6(D).

We are also aware that some programmes have been wrongly counting parts of their programme as 'simulated practice learning hours' for activities that would not meet pre-registration standards for practice learning, including standards for student supervision and assessment. For example, e-learning packages, completing work online or reflecting without practice supervision. Similarly, it should be noted that one hour of simulated practice should only count as one hour of practice learning. Please see supporting information for [simulated practice learning](#) if you require further guidance or assurance that your simulated practice hours meet our standards.

Note: Midwifery programmes do not permit any of the required practice learning hours to be delivered through simulation.

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**Action required:** As part of the attached exceptional reporting form we have asked specific questions to ensure that simulated practice learning is being delivered in line with our standards. Please ensure this is completed for each of your nursing programmes.

### Reflection

Reflection is a critical and necessary part of nursing and midwifery practice, and AEs rightly include reflection within their programmes. It is essential to continuous learning and improvement of practice that benefits people we care for. It enables them to make sense of a situation and understand how it has affected them, recognise good practice, and contributes to personal as well as professional development. It helps them to identify areas for learning and development, including from things that have gone well, to include in their professional development objectives. It also supports sharing and learning from other professionals.

Whilst reflection is fundamental to learning and programmes, we are aware that some AEs have been counting a significant number of hours of reflection as practice learning hours, without any defined structure, purposeful activity or supervision, so not meeting NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment.

**Action required:** As part of your Annual Self-Report you submitted information on inclusion of reflection as part of your programmes, particularly that which is being included as practice learning hours. This is currently being reviewed. Should we identify concerns we will contact you to seek assurance.

Where simulated practice or reflection activities are being counted as practice learning hours inappropriately, work will need to be done to ensure current students have achieved the correct number of practice hours prior to completing their programme to assure eligibility for upload to the register. If we identify concerns that students who have graduated have joined the register without the required number of practice hours, we will need to consider appropriate regulatory action.

### Satellite sites

As part of a programme's approval process we approve the different sites where the non-practice hours are delivered. Where an AE wishes to teach the programme at a different site (a satellite site) which could be a different campus, or geographical location this must be approved through a major modification. As part of this process our visitors review the provision to ensure that our standards are met within the new setting. We have been made aware of a satellite site that was being used to teach students that had not been approved by the NMC – in such cases we may require the provision to be stopped.

**Action required:** On the attached form please articulate for each of your programmes if, and if so where, you have any satellite sites for each of your programmes, and include the date of the visit that the site was approved. If you have a satellite site that you have not had approved please contact [QATeam@nmc-uk.org](mailto:QATeam@nmc-uk.org).

With the impact of the pandemic and the changes between standards and programmes reverting to their previous provision we are aware that inadvertently not all programmes will have reverted fully. As part of the actions arising from this letter please may I ask that you take this opportunity to review and reflect on all your provision to ensure it meets our standards.

If you have any questions then please don't hesitate to contact us at [QATeam@nmc-uk.org](mailto:QATeam@nmc-uk.org)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S Foster', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sam Foster  
Executive Nurse Director of Professional Practice