

STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE LEARNING FOR THE DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK

**NOTES
ON
IMPLEMENTATION**

July 2008

Northern Ireland Social Care Council
Practice Learning Standards
Notes on Implementation

INTRODUCTION

The Notes on Implementation outlined below are provided to assist and support DPLPs while continuing to work towards full compliance with the Practice Learning Standards. Work on developing a Regional Strategy for Practice Learning Provision will need to take account of the challenges faced by DPLPs in complying fully with the Practice Learning Standards.

Criterion	Issue	Note on Implementation
2.4.5 Ensures there are a minimum of three tripartite meetings involving academic staff, work-based staff and student to plan the student practice learning package and to monitor student progress. At least two of these meetings must take place in the workplace. It is recommended that the first and second tripartite take place in the workplace.	Number of tripartites and location of these. It was reported that these are not required to support the student's practice development and are resource intensive.	It is accepted that in situations where there are difficulties as many tripartites as necessary will be convened. In light of the findings of recent reviews and inspections, there will be no change to this requirement until the completion of the Review of the Degree in Social Work. This review will facilitate further consideration of the role and active involvement of academic staff during practice learning.
3.1.4 Has procedures in place to co-operate with NISCC conduct proceedings and course 'fitness to practise' procedures, in the event of any alleged misconduct by	Students' Fitness to Practise Procedures. Regional guidance needed.	Documentation is now available from NISCC and the Degree Partnership - refer to NISCC website and Degree Partnership Office on "Premature Endings & Termination of PLOs".

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registered social work students that might call into question their registration with NISCC and/or continuation on professional training.		
3.1.10 Ensures an ongoing supply of competent, trained and qualified staff to provide effective and safe workplace assessment and practice learning to the required standards and volume (See Part 4).	Difficulty in maintaining supply of practice teachers/assessors to required standards linked to Part 4.	Supply of trained and qualified staff to be based on the Good Practice Arrangements which follow. (See guidance 3.7.1).
3.2.3 Maintains a record of staff who meet NISCC requirements for practice education and/or assessment (Part 4).	The records are not inclusive of all practice teachers/assessors if they do not meet the requirements as specified in Part 4. This means that the information is not comprehensive.	DPLPs should include all practice teachers/assessors.
3.2.4 Develops practice learning sites and opportunities to reflect the full range of social work settings across programmes of care/client groups in organisation.	Difficulty in developing additional sites for singleton practice teachers/assessors as they do not yet meet Part 4 requirements.	The development of sites should be based upon the guidance at 3.7.1.

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3.2.5 Has plans for developing, brokering ¹ and sustaining a range of practice learning opportunities across organisational boundaries.	Brokering across organisational boundaries -Regional template needed.	DPLPS should use the development of a Regional Strategy for Practice Learning Provision as an opportunity to progress this requirement.
3.5.1 Ensures the student receives appropriate induction to the workplace, is clear what is expected of them by the organisation and what they may expect from the organisation and planned practice learning experiences.	Induction Standards - are these to be applied to student induction?	NISCC Induction Standards are not required to be applied in respect of students but should form the basis for best practice.
3.5.4 Ensures students have access to study facilities, computers and learning accommodation and appropriate learning materials.	In some agencies not all staff currently has access to these facilities.	This issue is linked to the planning processes for practice learning provision. The issue should be taken up with senior management within agencies.

¹ Where services are subcontracted to other providers, consideration should be given to develop ways to include the provision of practice learning opportunities in contracts and service level agreements as well as specifying the support the commissioning organisation could offer in relation to practice learning provision from smaller provider organisations.

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<p>3.6.2 Ensures each student is allocated to a registered social worker who is trained and suitably qualified to manage and facilitate the student's practice learning experience in the workplace (Part 4).</p>	<p>The Practice Educator and Practice Assessor role is invariably not being split in practice learning provision regionally, making adherence to Part 4 difficult.</p>	<p>If the Roles are split, Practice Educators must meet the criteria as set out in 4.2.2. If the roles are being combined, this should be based on guidance at 3.7.1.</p>
<p>3.6.4 Ensures each student has an individual development supervision session of a minimum 2 hours per fortnight with a practice educator up to the mid point of Level 3 (this is in addition to professional case supervision and any other support activities).</p>	<p>DPLPs have identified that weekly supervision is the custom and practice for the vast majority of PLO sites.</p>	<p>A minimum requirement is specified and it is accepted that more frequent supervision is normally provided. However, this criterion allows for arrangements to be responsive to the individual learning needs of the student and to agency supervision policies. See also the note in respect of 3.6.5.</p>
<p>3.6.5 Ensures, from the mid point of Level 3 where a student is assessed as having progressed satisfactorily, that s/he is supported by the practice educator to use a range of professional and</p>	<p>DPLPs have a lack of understanding of what this requires at the mid point Level 3 with the student taking more responsibility for own learning.</p>	<p>There is a need to ensure that the student understands and prepares for the responsibilities linked to registration i.e. that h/she must take responsibility for ensuring that their conduct does not fall below the standard set out in the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers, (NISCC 2002). This includes being accountable for the quality of</p>

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<p>organisational supports and to take responsibility for her/his own learning and continuing professional development in anticipation of their future status as a registered social worker.</p>		<p>their work and taking responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. Students therefore need to learn how to work outwith the structured environment of the practice learning opportunity.</p>
<p>3.6.7 Monitors the student experience on the reliability and effectiveness of the supervision, support and guidance received and feedback to course provider as part of annual monitoring.</p>	<p>Monitoring of student experience Clarification needed.</p>	<p>NISCC suggests that a single monitoring tool is developed on a regional basis and will oversee this in collaboration with the Strategic Practice Learning subgroup of the Degree Partnership.</p>
<p>3.7.1 Ensures each student's practice learning is assessed by a registered social worker who is trained and qualified to the NISCC requirements. At Level 3 assessors must also have relevant experience to be</p>	<p>There are circumstances in which some providers are unable to comply with the requirements for practice assessor as set out in paragraph 4.3.3 of the Standards for Practice Learning.</p>	<p>Approximately one third of PLOs are provided by singleton practice teachers/assessors and DPLPs have informed NISCC that many of these singletons are unable to provide more than one PLO annually. NISCC accepts that some DPLPs are unable to comply fully with a number of criteria which are linked to the requirements and that they</p>

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<p>eligible to carry out the final assessment of a student's fitness for practice (See Part 4).</p>		<p>are permitted to continue to provide PLOs. However, arrangements must be put in place to ensure practice assessors are experienced to take Level 3 students and these will be monitored by NISCC. See Good Practice Arrangements below. All DPLPs must continue to work towards full compliance.</p>
<p>3.7.2 Ensures that assessments carried out by those undergoing training and taking their first student, or by those who only take one student per year, are verified by an experienced assessor (see Part 4).</p>	<p>DPLPs are unable to put in place a system of verification of assessment when assessor takes only one student per year.</p>	<p>In respect of those who only take one student per year, the Good Practice Arrangements outlined as part of 3.7.1 should be adhered to.</p>
<p>3.7.4 Ensures mechanisms are in place to facilitate first line managers' contribution to the assessment of student competence in the workplace at Level 3.</p>	<p>First line managers' contribution to the assessment of student competence.</p>	<p>Regardless of profession, this contribution is required and how this is secured is the responsibility of the practice teacher/assessor. NISCC suggests that an appropriate format should be developed on a regional basis and will oversee this in collaboration with the Strategic Practice Learning subgroup of the Degree Partnership.</p>
<p>3.8.2 Reviews the experiences of contributors to practice learning including students, academic and workplace staff,</p>	<p>Reviews experiences of contributors to PLO. Clarification needed.</p>	<p>To be undertaken as part of the organisation's own audit/quality assurance arrangements. NISCC suggests that an appropriate recording tool or tools should be developed on a regional basis.</p>

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service users and carers for each period of practice learning.		
3.8.6 Has an action plan to improve arrangements for practice learning arising from the regional review, recommendations in the annual monitoring report and recommendations from NISCC; notifies the NISCC immediately of any material information that may compromise the quality or safety of practice learning provision.	Mechanisms for reporting factors Clarification needed.	An additional page will be attached to annual report pro-forma which should be completed and returned to NISCC as appropriate.
4.2 and 4.3 4.2 NISCC Requirements for Practice Educators for the Degree in Social Work. 4.3 NISCC Requirements for Practice Assessors for the Degree in Social Work.	Practice educators/practice assessors - split or combined role?	The Standards for Practice Learning permit these roles to be combined.
Appendix 1 Transition Arrangements	Transition arrangements/ time-frames	Implementation of the Standards for Practice Learning remains on an incremental and developmental basis pending the outcome of the

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		Review of the Degree in Social Work and the development of the Regional Strategy for Practice Learning Provision. NISCC staff will continue to support providers towards full compliance.
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GOOD PRACTICE ARRANGEMENTS

It is expected that Designated Practice Learning Providers will have such arrangements in place to satisfy NISCC that practice teachers/assessors have the continuing experience necessary to carry out the assessment of practice learning which meets best practice. These arrangements will be monitored by NISCC through its Quality Assurance Framework. The list below reflects what NISCC accepts as good practice and NISCC will encourage all Designated Practice Learning Providers to work towards ensuring that these, or comparable, arrangements are put in place. It may be that regional collaboration will facilitate their development.

1. There should be a formal re-accreditation policy, broadly similar to the Approved Social Worker status. Some larger organisations already operate such a scheme. It is recommended that this should be extended to all Designated Practice Learning Providers. This policy should provide for mandatory refresher training for all practice teachers/assessors.
2. Continuous Professional Development should be mandatory for practice teachers/assessors to maintain their competency in social work education and assessment. These courses already exist in some agencies and could be developed jointly across the region.
3. Where practice teacher/assessors are unable to work with the minimum number of students as specified in Part 4 of the Standards, there should be evidence that they are competent, within their area of practice, to supervise and assess others. This may be through management, mentoring/assessment at a post qualifying level or specialist practice. There is an expectation that DPLPs will continue to work towards full compliance with the requirements as specified in Part 4 of the Standards.
4. The formal application of the agency's own Clinical and Social Care Governance arrangements to the practice learning task will ensure that a risk based approach is taken to student learning.

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5. Registration of the practice teacher/assessor with the NISCC and adherence to the Codes of Practice will also ensure that the practice of the practice teacher/assessor remains current and competent, that practice safeguards are in place and unsafe or risky practice by the practice teacher/assessor or student is minimised.
6. The quality assurance and quality enhancement role of the Practice Assessment Panels in sampling and overseeing the quality of work from practice teachers/assessors should be further harnessed and formalised, with a formal feedback loop to Designated Practice Learning Providers.
7. NISCC will continue to monitor compliance with the Standards taking account of the Notes on Implementation. Professional staff are available to advise and support DPLPs in working towards the regional approaches outlined above.