



University of Central Lancashire



**Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care
(Assistant Practitioner)**

Mentor Handbook

**School of Health
October 2013**

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Welcome

Welcome and thank you for offering to support a student on the Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner). Your role will be vital in helping students undertaking this course to achieve success. This handbook is intended to supplement information provided at the Mentor workshops and it is hoped that it will prove a valuable resource for you to note any ideas that you may have, in relation to the course or your role as a mentor, on the pages at the back of the booklet. This may then be used to promote discussion at future forums and will be one way that you can actively participate in developing the course.

The Assistant Practitioner lecturers and Work Based Education Facilitators (WBEFs) value your contribution to the assessment process and the course in general, and hope that you will not hesitate to contact them if you have any questions or suggestions. The following contact details are provided to help you identify the appropriate person to phone or email if you have queries.

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Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner)

Introduction

Welcome to the Foundation Degree course in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner). A Foundation degree is a qualification which is specifically designed to be vocational, bringing together academic theory and work practice in a meaningful way in order to prepare students for a particular role within a particular work place. It provides the opportunity for shared and inter-professional learning. For example, students studying at the Westlakes and Preston campus are from a variety of professional backgrounds e.g. mental health, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and nursing and they learn together and from each other.

This course is run by the staff from the School of Health at the University of Central Lancashire, supported by WBEFs and Mentors.

WHAT IS AN ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER (AP)?

The Assistant Practitioner is a new role in health and social care created to bridge the gap between healthcare assistants or support workers and registered practitioners e.g. nurses, therapists etc. APs will be working within a health or social care setting and will study modules relating to their area of work in order for them to develop additional skills and competences and the knowledge that underpins these. Uclan staff will work closely with their managers and mentors to provide a course that makes them 'fit for purpose' and to allow them to assume the role of Assistant Practitioner in their own area. Class attendance will be combined with work based learning throughout the course.

This programme will prepare students to work as an AP as part of the wider healthcare team.

The whole emphasis of this course is on work-based learning and how we can use everyday experience to learn and develop skills and knowledge. This will involve having one day per week for study in the University but also using work experiences as a tool for learning too. Students are also expected to undertake approximately 15-20 hours of personal study per week. The course is delivered jointly by academic and clinical staff who are committed to

supporting students whilst they complete the course, both in the formal teaching environment and in their work place.

What is work-based learning (WBL)?

Work based learning is:

‘Learning that takes place in, and is closely related to, authentic work practices. Providing an integrated approach to theory and practice, focussing on context-specific learning. It involves collaboration with, and occurs in, the student/trainee’s normal place of work’ (Garrick and Kirkpatrick 1998)

KEY POINTS

- There is a distinction between work-based activity and work-based learning.
- WBL is evidenced by measurable learning outcomes.
- Recognition of WBL requires a process of reflection and evaluation and takes place over time.
- Validation of WBL can be achieved through learning agreements, personal development plans and portfolios of evidence.
- WBL requires a work context that is conducive to learning, where individuals can be helped to recognise and articulate their learning.

In summary, WBL recognises the value of everyday experiences as potential for learning through activity and experience. The learning process is continuous in a systematic cycle of analysis, action and review. **It places students and their work context(s) at the centre of the learning process.**

In this way we integrate formal learning events with their everyday work experiences in order to develop the knowledge and skills required to be an effective AP.

Whatever their location of study, we are all committed to making their study enjoyable and productive. We will do our best to provide a supportive learning environment in which they can develop the understanding and skills they need to meet current and future goals. We also hope that students will play their part by getting involved in the learning opportunities we provide.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE LEARNING PROCESS?

The learning process is viewed as a **partnership** between the **student**, their **Mentor**, **WBEF** and their **Link Lecturer**. Students will all have an individual mentor and there

will be one WBEF and one link lecturer per Trust. In addition, their Trust may have appointed a **Project Champion**. This person will be a senior member of staff who will liaise with Managers in order to ensure the smooth running of the course. The student's manager is also a key person in helping them to achieve their goals. S/he will have agreed whilst securing funding that students will be supported in the workplace and they will provide an environment which will support their learning as they work.

WBEFs, Mentors, Managers and Link Lecturers all have important roles to play in helping students achieve success. This course is grounded in a tripartite relationship where the student, academic staff and clinical staff work in partnership to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes and role development.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students:

1. Commitment to the course
2. Attendance at all learning events and study days
3. Completion of learning activities
4. Participation in learning activities
5. Completion of assessment requirements
6. Adherence to codes of conduct and academic regulations
7. Participation in the learning experience
8. Course evaluation and future development

Managers:

1. Support the student, assessors and WBEF in developing the ethos of work based learning.
2. Assist the student, assessors and WBEF to review the programme and develop action plans to facilitate the success of the programme.
3. Clarify any issues and liaise with the WBEF, education provider and project champion.
4. Enable the student to access a range of internal and external learning opportunities as per service level agreement and as negotiated with the WBEF.
5. Assist the students in identifying developmental needs..
6. Link with the project champion and internal steering group to monitor the impact of the development on service delivery including patient/service user satisfaction.

7. Ensure students have access to IT/ Internet facilities.
8. Provide opportunity and support cultural change for implementation of newly acquired clinical skills.
9. Will ensure that the student/trainee is released 1 day per week to attend the academic learning.
10. Facilitate mentors' attendance at formal update workshops

The WBEF is responsible for:

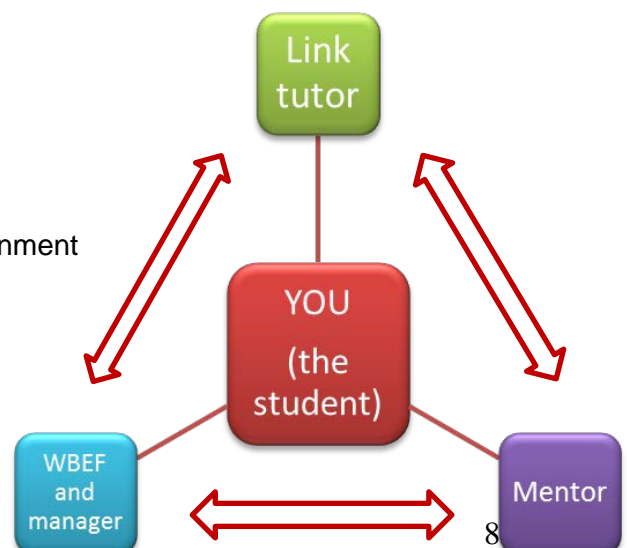
1. Teaching and learning support in the workplace
2. Academic and pastoral support in the work place
3. Assessment of WBL
4. Liaison with the University staff
5. Course evaluation and continued development
6. Link between Mentor and Link Tutors.

The Mentor (one per Student) is responsible for:

1. Teaching and learning in the workplace
2. Assessment of WBL especially skills competencies
3. pastoral support
4. Course evaluation.
5. Attending Mentor update workshops

The Link Tutor (one per Trust) is responsible for:

1. Preparation of Mentors, WBEFs and students
2. Course organisation
3. Teaching
4. Assessment
5. Quality assurance
6. Liaison with WBEF
7. Academic and pastoral support
8. Facilitating a supportive learning environment
9. Course evaluation.



Background

The course has been developed in the light of a number of national government policies relating to health care. These documents have influenced the way in which the course has been designed and the content of the modules which students will study. Examples of these documents include:

1. The NHS Plan and other Department of Health documentation
2. Professional body regulations and curriculum frameworks
3. The University of Central Lancashire policies and procedures for Academic Quality Assurance
4. National Occupational Standards/ Training Organisation for Personal Social Services (TOPSS)
5. NHS Knowledge & Skills Framework
6. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmark statements for Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language Therapy and Nursing
7. National Service Frameworks for Long Term Conditions and Mental Health
8. Consultation with numerous stakeholders including therapy service managers, therapists, nurses, other education providers and representatives from NHS Northwest.

Aims

The Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) aims to provide a flexible interdisciplinary course with an emphasis on “fitness for practice”, which bridges the gap between theory and practice. It will meet individual and organisational requirements in the health sector through the integrated development of vocationally and academically relevant knowledge and skills.

The aims of the programme are:

1. To equip students with academic knowledge and skills in order to enhance their ability to understand and discuss the context and issues relevant to their current or future work in health care and social care.
2. To enable students to use understanding and analysis of relevant academic theories and concepts, evidence and reflection on experience to enhance their work performance, personal and cultural awareness, ability to work across organisational boundaries and adapt to a changing environment.

3. To equip students with a range of subject specific and transferable knowledge and skills to support their continuing personal, professional and academic development.
4. To equip students with core and specialist skills to enable them to support professional practice.

Programme Rationale

The Foundation Degree in Health & Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) has been designed to meet the academic requirements for the development of the Assistant Practitioner grade within health care. This grade has been created in response to the changing workforce initiatives currently operating within the health & social care sectors.

The programme includes a range of **academic** and **work-based** modules designed to cover a range of skills and knowledge required by support staff working under supervision. The programme structure includes core modules as well as shared modules. The work based modules are designed to allow the students to apply their learning to suit their work context and individual learning needs.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the Foundation Degree students will be able to:

1. Identify the theory and practice underpinning the organisation and context of health provision and social care delivery.
2. Analyse and apply theories of communication to the development of relationships and work with individuals and groups.
3. Analyse and apply theories relevant to working within a collaborative interprofessional environment.
4. Explore the application of relevant knowledge, ethical awareness and experience to the analysis of issues and practice in relation to equal opportunity, social inclusion, cultural diversity, human rights, user and carer engagement and work with colleagues.
5. Integrate and apply relevant theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in a work setting.
6. Utilise evidence, support and share experience to develop effective practice and decision-making.
7. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of current European and national legislation, national guidelines and local policies and protocols which affect work practice
8. Identify and apply skills relevant to personal, career and academic learning and development in a changing environment
9. Develop underpinning knowledge of physiological and psychological basis for health and social care
10. Apply models of health promotion to achieve behavioural change in patients and clients
11. Work collaboratively with professional colleagues to enhance service provision
12. Utilise assessment skills to identify interventions required for patients and clients
13. Demonstrate the ability to act within the limits of own competence and authority
14. Reflect on own life and work experience to enhance knowledge and skills.
15. Utilise critical analysis to apply key concepts, theories and evidence to relevant issues and practices.
16. Present knowledge and information to support structured arguments.
17. Evaluate and select approaches to problem solving.
18. Demonstrate skills in information collection and analysis
19. Utilise oral, written and visual communication to support structured argument
20. Demonstrate ability to utilise information technology to exchange data
21. Utilise appropriate strategies to enhance own learning and development
22. Develop strategies to enhance collaboration with others

Programme Structure

The following diagram illustrates the structure of the course. Students will be assisted in applying the content of modules to their own area of practice through the assignments.

In addition, students will be able to undertake an optional module in the first and second year that relates to their area of practice in order to allow students to acquire background knowledge which is relevant to their role, a number of optional modules are offered in each year. These are listed below in the second table for each year.

Year One (Level four) Core modules

MODULE	ASSESSMENT	SUBMISSION due approx.
PZ1015 Study and Lifelong learning Skills (20)	Reflective Report(1000 words) Essay (1200 words)	Nov 13
PZ1022 Communication and Collaboration (20)	Essay (2000 words) and group presentation	Dec 13
PZ1067 Anatomy, Physiology and Psychology in Health (40)	50 question 1hr MCQ Essay (2000 words)	Exam date tbc May 14
Optional Module (20)	Various	June 2014
PZ1068 Foundations for Practice (20)	Essay (2000 words) Supported by portfolio evidence	Aug 2014

120 credits

Level 4 Optional modules—students to select 1 option in negotiation with mentor and manager		
PZ1105	Introduction to Long Term Conditions	Jane Wilkinson
PZ1046	Mental Health Across the Lifespan	Barry McRory
PW1005	Introduction to Unscheduled and Acute Care	Lindsay Robinson
PW1010	Introduction to Clinical imaging	Heather Robinson
NU1003	Student Initiated module	Heather Robinson

Exit award

PLEASE NOTE that if for any reason a student needs to leave the course after successfully completing Year one they will be awarded a Foundation Certificate in Health and Social Care, but will not be eligible for Assistant Practitioner status.

Year two (Level five) Core modules

MODULE	ASSESSMENT	SUBMISSION due approx
NU2335 Research Process (20)	Literature review (1000 words) 30% Oral presentation (15mins) 70%	Nov 14
PZ2073 Health Promotion (20)	Written assignment (1500 words) OR Poster + rationale	Dec 14
Optional Module (20)	Various (but mainly 3000 words essay)	March 15
PZ2066 Developing Practice (40)	Portfolio	Aug15
PZ2035 Management and Leadership in Health & Social Care (20)	Essay (3000 words)	Aug 15

Level 5 Optional modules –students to select 1 option in negotiation with mentor and manager		
PZ2036	Physiological Responses to Health and Illness	Lindsay Robinson
PZ2080	Management of Long Term Conditions across the Lifespan	Anne Milston
PW2020	Interventions in Mental Health	Barry McRory
PZ2074	Assisting Rehabilitation Practice	Anne Milston
PW2010	Principles & Practice in Clinical Imaging	Heather Robinson
MW2709	Student Initiated Module	Heather Robinson

Decisions regarding which of the optional modules is appropriate for your students will be agreed with your line manager and will relate to the students area of work and their role within the team.

The descriptor for each module is in the Information for Managers handbook which is available on the Blackboard page which all students have access to. This contains more detail about module content and assessment. As we are constantly reviewing the content of the course modules may be removed and/or updated regularly to ensure that changes in practice are reflected. This may affect the availability of the modules listed above. Students will receive up to date lists at the beginning of the year from which to choose.

Please note that optional modules will only run if there are enough candidates and may run only on the main campus dependent on numbers

Teaching and Learning Strategies

The course encompasses several themes that are important to anyone working in health and social care settings. These themes include **health promotion and health psychology, inter-professional working, evidence-based practice, equality and diversity, service user involvement and lifelong learning.**

Through work based learning the student will achieve new skills and competencies necessary for their role of Assistant Practitioner.

Work-Based Learning (WBL)

WBL recognises that every day experiences have potential for promoting learning through activity and experience. The learning process is continuous in a systematic cycle of analysis, action and review. **It places the student and their work context(s) at the centre of the learning process. WBL is based on the understanding that the student can turn work experiences into meaningful learning through a process of thinking about and reflecting upon every day work activities in order to develop their knowledge and skills within a specific work context. There is a lot of evidence that suggests we learn through many different activities and that our experiences can play a vital role in our learning.**

This course has been designed in such a way as to maximise the amount of learning students can achieve through their work experiences. It will also allow them to experience shared learning in the classroom with colleagues from various professional backgrounds. The teaching and learning strategies that we will be using are designed to support them in developing their ability to systematically think about and reflect upon their everyday work to turn it into a learning experience.

The teaching and learning strategies put the student very much at the centre of the learning process and their mentor, WBEF and link lecturer will act as facilitators to their personal learning. Learning activities will be interactive and students will be asked to bring their experiences into the classroom to discuss and debate with others.

We will be using a range of **problem based** and **case based** teaching methods. This means that students will be learning the theory in an integrated way with practice and therefore it should be easier to link the theory with what they do every day. In this way we will integrate formal learning events with their everyday work experiences in order to develop the knowledge and skills required to be an effective AP. We

therefore hope to make their learning meaningful, and closely integrated with practice.

In between the formal one day study days students will be given problems to think about and research as they go about their practice during the rest of the week. Mentors and WBEFs will help students in this process and they are key to the whole process of work based learning. In addition the interactive e Learn environment will be used to support learning activities. (e Learn is an on-line learning resource which is designed to facilitate learning).

The teaching and learning methods will help students to develop their skills in using learning tools which support them as independent learners such as portfolios, personal development plans, learning agreements, skills logs, and reflective writing. These will also be used to assess the student throughout the course and should provide them with evidence to demonstrate to employers their ability to take on the role of AP in the work place.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy is aligned to the work based learning design of the programme and is designed to enable us to assess ability to:

- 'Do the job' of an AP effectively
- Demonstrate knowledge and skills through competencies
- Be fit for the award of Foundation Degree

The assessments are designed to assess both academic ability and competency to practice. **All the assessments have been designed to reflect the WBL design of the programme as well as demonstrating academic rigour.**

The academic based assessments include:

1. Examinations
2. Presentations
3. Written work.
4. Workbooks

These assessments are closely related to work activities and involve case reports, written pieces of work and work based around the portfolio of evidence.

The work based assessments include:

1. Skills Log (competency based to include core and specialist competencies)
2. Personal Development plans
3. Portfolio of evidence
4. Critical incident reporting and reflective exercises

Who will be involved in assessment?

The **WBEF**, **Mentor** and the **Link Lecturer** from the University will be involved in assessing the students throughout the programme. In addition there will be a number of associate Mentors identified in the work place who will also be involved in signing off the practice competencies. An associate mentor is a registered practitioner who is familiar with supporting students in the workplace. Associate mentors do not necessarily have a mentor qualification and cannot sign off competencies, sign off is countersigned by the first mentor, this assists the ward area if there is a shortfall of qualified mentors. The WBEFs in clinical areas will help students identify Mentors and associate mentors to help with their skills assessment. However mentors are usually assigned by department managers not WBEFs. The assessment process is viewed as a collaborative process and students will be involved in negotiated aspects of the assessment with their Mentors. This is particularly important in respect of the portfolio, the personal development plans and learning agreements.

Work-Based Learning Assessment Methods

Portfolio Development

Throughout the course students will be required to maintain a portfolio. This portfolio will constitute the main component of their assessment of practice which they must pass in order to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. It will incorporate a Skills Log, including evidence of the acquisition of skills and underpinning knowledge as they progress through the course. The Skills Log will also demonstrate that the student is 'fit for practice' as an Assistant Practitioner. This is a key area of involvement for Mentors as you are the person who is most likely to be signing off competencies in the Skills log. You will be determining whether a student has the relevant skills and evidence to demonstrate their competence

The portfolio will also contain reflective accounts, personal development plans, learning agreements and a range of other evidence of their learning and development. The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate that the students have the underpinning knowledge to support the new skills they are acquiring. Contents of

the portfolio will be reviewed regularly throughout the programme of study, by WBEFs. The final assessment of this major piece of work is undertaken, initially, by the WBEF and successful completion is required in order for the student to gain the award.

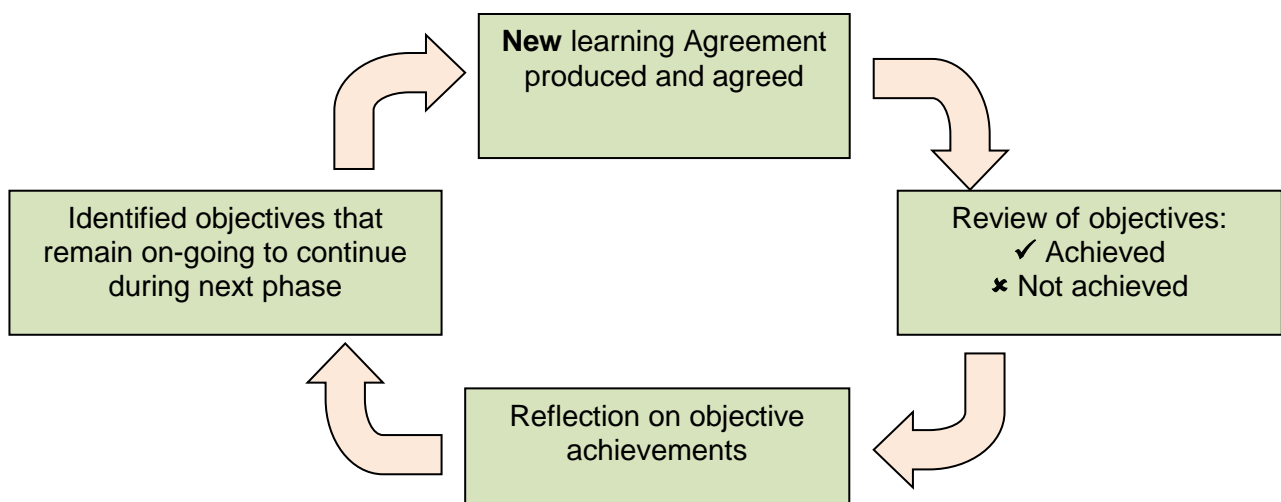
Reflective Practice

Reflective practice will allow students to demonstrate in a realistic way their knowledge and skills. They will be supported to do this through the module leader, WBEF and link lecturer. Reflective practice will be introduced in the Study skills & Lifelong Learning module at the start of the course. Reflection is an important part of the learning cycle and will help students to turn everyday practice into a learning experience.

The Learning Agreement

This course is grounded in a tripartite relationship between, the student, support in practice (from your WBEF, manager and mentor) and support from the University (Link Lecturer). Through this relationship students will develop a **learning agreement** which will help them identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as providing them with a formal way of integrating their academic (theoretical) and practice experience. The learning agreement will help them to identify their learning needs and will help them to identify learning objectives relating to their work which they will need to achieve. Students will also need to be able to identify the types of resources they require in order to achieve their objectives.

Learning Agreements Process



This is a cyclical process: objectives can be carried forward.

Skills Log

The Skills Log has been designed in consultation with clinicians who work in the same areas of practice as the students, as well as with WBEFs, academic staff and external advisors. It reflects the Knowledge and Skills Framework for the NHS and National Occupational Standards and also the Core Standards for Assistant Practitioners which have recently been developed by Skills for Health. The Log is composed of three sections. Section 1 details core skills that make the student 'fit for purpose (KSF dimensions). Section 2 lists the Skills for Health Core Standards 'fit for award and Section 3 details skills specifically relevant to the role that the student is likely to be undertaking after qualifying as an Assistant Practitioner. This section will result in a student who is 'fit for practice' When the student commences the course this section is blank. The appropriate skills will be decided by negotiation with the Mentor, Manager, WBEF and Uclan staff, in order to match skills to the student's job description, rendering them 'fit for practice'. It is a synoptic document, meaning that students work to complete it throughout the course.

Assessment

In order to graduate with a Foundation Degree in Health & Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) students need to complete all of the relevant skills identified in the Skills Log at Level 3. It is a course requirement that each of the specific skills are signed by the mentor or the associate mentor and include the specific date competence has been achieved by the student

At each of their personal tutors, mentors and WBEF meetings students' progress with the Skills Log will be monitored. Students must also provide evidence in their portfolio, to demonstrate that they understand the theory that underpins the skills they are developing. The students and WBEFs will have further information regarding Portfolio Development. WBEFs co-ordinate portfolio development workshops for the trainee's to ensure understanding of the portfolio which also allows them to disseminate the information to the mentors)

Skills Development

In order to maximise workplace learning students are encouraged to take every opportunity to access situations which may assist in skills development. However, they should then research that particular area of practice using trust policies and protocols and the National Occupational Standards identified as relevant to that skill.

These can be found next to each skill in the Skills Log and can be accessed in full at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

Any evidence collected must be compiled in the portfolio and referenced in the Skills Log.

Mentor Support

We acknowledge that Mentors are a vital part of the team involved in supporting and developing the students.

We hold a Mentor workshop at UCLAN and your students (and WBEFs) will be informed of the dates. If you need further information and advice please do not hesitate to contact your WBEF or Link Lecturer

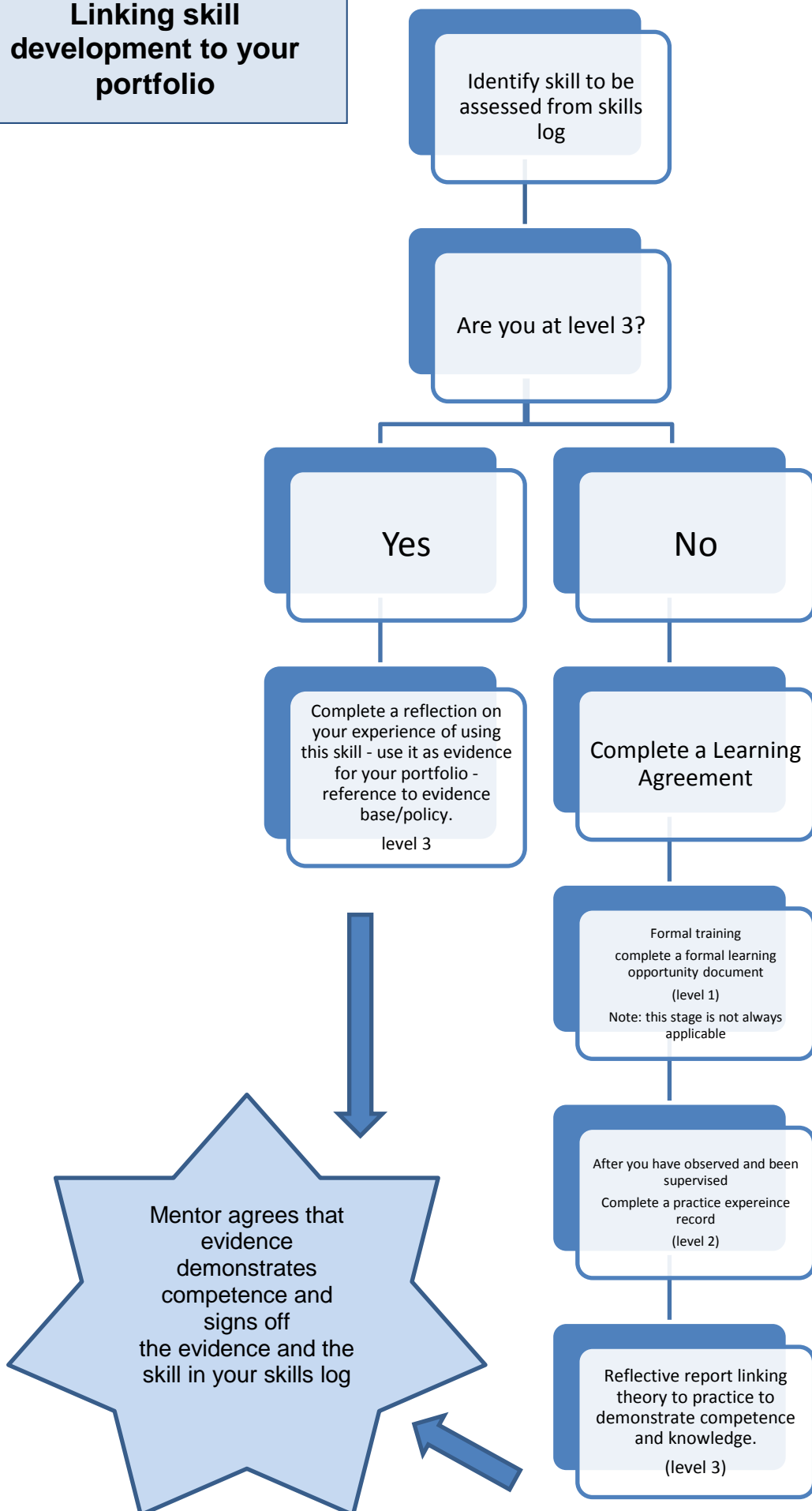
It is recognised within this programme that associate mentors are utilised and are a key area of support for the named mentor. The rationale for use of associate mentors is as follows:

- Students may be gaining skills across disciplines for example a Trainee Assistant Practitioner working within a Rehabilitation environment may be required to develop skills with a nursing, physiotherapy or occupational therapy practice. Therefore if the named mentor is a nurse then an associate mentor within the other disciplines could be required depending on the skills which need to be assessed.
- The student requires support in the work place for the duration of the course a period of two years an extensive mentorship period. Use of an associate mentor is valuable support and a beneficial role for individuals who are working towards there mentorship qualification
- Good examples of associate mentors are the qualified Assistant Practitioners as this continues the development of the Assistant Practitioner role and also they have experience and in depth knowledge of the course.

Your student will have a portfolio handbook which may be useful for you to read. This contains guidance for them on how to build their portfolio.

They also have “Guidance for students on Formulating learning agreements” which you will also find useful. The following chart is part of that document.

Linking skill development to your portfolio



Frequently Asked Questions

1. As a mentor, how much time is expected to be spent with trainees?

It is expected that a mentor should be spending at least 50% of their working week supporting the trainee in practice. This however can sometimes prove difficult when there are staffing issues. It is therefore a good idea for an associate mentor to be identified. This associate mentor must have experience of mentoring but does not necessarily have to have a mentoring qualification. In this case the signing off of competencies must incorporate a dual approach from both mentors, with the qualified mentor either making the final sign off or counter signing the signature of the associate mentor.

2. How do I support the trainee in identifying 'fit for practice' skills?

All NOS skills can be located on the Skills for Health website. Here you can search for specific skills appropriate for the area where the trainee is working. These skills can then be transferred into the trainee's skills log. The website also allows you to save the chosen competencies in a specific 'list'. These will make them easily accessible but will also inform you when changes are made to a specific skill. The decision about which skills to choose should be decided between mentor and trainee, although you may want to involve your WBEF in some cases.

3. What documentation in the trainee's portfolio is required to be signed or completed by a mentor?

The documentation included in the portfolio consists of a number of different items that are abbreviated to assist with cross referencing. Here is a brief outline of the documentation involved:

SWOTs – these are to be completed by the trainee and should outline their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (one per semester). These weaknesses should then be highlighted on a:

PDP (Personal Development Plan) – the aim of these is for a trainee to be able to highlight their academic weaknesses. Feedback from an assignment is a good place to start. For example: referencing, academic writing, time management etc (one per semester).

LAs (Learning Agreement) – these need to be completed with the mentor. Needs to include information around what they are going to learn in the clinical area and what resources will be utilised to help them gain competence. Time scales need to be highlighted and they also need to be cross referenced to other evidence within the portfolio. A Mentor is expected to sign these during the programme.

PERs (Practice Experience Records) – these need to be completed by the trainee after they have observed a skill undertaken by their mentor or other qualified personnel. These need to be signed by the mentor during the programme.

FLOs (Formal Learning Opportunity) – these need to be completed by the trainee each time they attend any formal learning/study. These need to show the trainees underpinning knowledge and clearly highlight what they have learnt from the study session they have attended. These need to be signed by the mentor/workshop facilitator during the programme.

RPRs (Reflective Practice Records) – these need to be completed by the trainee after they have put any clinical skill into practice. They need to be patient focused and clearly show knowledge and competence in the skill they are performing. The trainee should be aware of all competencies in the skills log as this will assist them when writing up reflective accounts. All aspects of the patient interaction should be addressed, for example: communication, health and safety issues, equality and diversity etc.

Other evidence that can be used within the portfolio will include certificates, assignments, feedback and workbooks completed after formal study sessions.

There is a significant amount of evidence and documentation which is used to demonstrate competence of practice, although it is expected that the students will hold lots of discussion with you about the documents outlined above, it is the **student's responsibility to complete all these documents** and the role of the mentor to review this as reliable evidence of practice and to sign off the document.

Any queries regarding the portfolio documentation can be discussed with your local WBEF.

4. Do I have to have sign off mentor status to be able to sign off final competencies?

A sign off mentor has to have the necessary mentorship qualification to enable them to sign off competencies in the skills log. Associate mentors can be utilised throughout the programme and these may not necessarily have the mentor qualification. As long as they have mentoring experience and understand their roles and responsibilities when mentoring, they can then act as an associate mentor and sign documentation such as reflections, formal learning opportunities and learning agreements. The Associate mentor role is ideal for someone working towards a mentor qualification.

5. What is a mentor's involvement during the work based learning modules?

The mentor will play an important role during the work based learning modules as they can assist the trainee in highlighting valuable learning experiences that will be beneficial to the student and their role as an assistant practitioner. Work based learning enables the trainee to gain valuable learning experience working alongside other professionals. This work based learning will take place during this specific

module and instead of the trainee attending university each week, they will use that day to complete their work based learning hours, of which a log will need to be completed. This log needs to be available within the portfolio.

6. How often should the mentor be reviewing the trainee's portfolio?

It is essential that the portfolio of evidence is reviewed on a regular basis by the mentor. It is vital that skills and evidence are signed as soon as possible as this assists the trainee to clearly see what they need to be focusing upon next. It also saves time at the end of the programme when, if not kept up to date, will involve the mentor signing a lot of paperwork/competencies in one sitting.

Once competence of a specific skill has been achieved then the students can continue to implement the skill. You do not have to wait until the end of the course before you can utilise the students in their role as a trainee assistant practitioner. It is therefore beneficial to review the skill development, learning needs and evidence on a regular basis

The WBEF is also responsible for reviewing the portfolio on a regular monthly basis, and this may be more if a trainee is having difficulties for whatever reason. The WBEF moderates all portfolios initially and so they need to be fully aware of where the trainees are up to in their development and what areas need to be focused upon.

7. What if I begin experiencing difficulties with a trainee? Who do I contact?

For any issues to be dealt with quickly and effectively, your WBEF will be your first point of call. All contact details are outlined in the mentor handbook. Your WBEF will be able to visit or contact you by telephone to discuss any immediate issues you may have. For sickness and absence issues, it is expected that all trainees would inform the university and also their line manager. All trainees need to have attended 80% of their university lecture time for them to complete the programme. Sickness and absence in the workplace should also be closely monitored by the trainee's line manager, as this will also affect their date of qualification.

Mentor's and manager's also need to be aware that if a trainee is having personal or health issues that are adversely affecting their studies, they do have other options available to them other than discontinuing from the programme. The opportunity for a trainee to suspend their studies is available and they can usually recommence the programme the following year, where they left off (providing previous modules have been completed). This will not affect their secondment as the employer will automatically start receiving backfill monies when the trainee recommences training.