



The Healthcare Student Placement Toolkit

- **Glossary of terms**

In order to simplify the document generic terminology has been used for the following terms:

Assessor / supervisor – this also refers to clinical educator, clinical facilitator clinical teacher, clinical supervisor, mentor, practice supervisor, supervising clinician, etc. The term therefore refers to whoever has professional responsibility for your learning in practice.

Learning outcome – this term also refers to competencies and proficiencies.

Link tutor –this term is used to refer to university staff who are your contact point whilst on placement.

Contents

Page

Introduction	3
Definition of a placement	4
Supernumerary status	4
Accountability	4
Professional behaviour	4
Patients' / clients' wishes	4
Assessors / supervisors	5
Practice Placement Managers	5
Working hours	5
Off duty requests	6
Part-time jobs	6
Sickness reporting	6
Special leave / Compassionate leave / Carers' leave	6
Bank holiday working	7
Study days	7
Placement dress code	7
Placement documentation	7
Answering and making telephone calls	7
Policies & procedures	8
Health & safety	8
Pregnant students	8
Students with disabilities	8
Bullying & harassment / discrimination	8
Stress	9
Tips for a successful placement	10
What can you expect from your placements?	11
What do practice staff expect from you?	11
Evaluation of placement areas	11
Car parking / travelling	11
Frequently asked questions	
- What do I do if I am failing?	12
- How do I fill in my assessment documentation	12
- What do I do if I witness bad practice?	12
- Can I have time out of my placement to visit my personal tutor/ have a tutorial?	13
- Can I go early?	13
- Can I work long days?	13
- What if I can't do the hours I have been rostered?	13
-	
- I don't enjoy working with my assessor / supervisor – what do I do?	14
- I haven't been allocated an assessor /supervisor – what do I do?	14
- I am not enjoying my placement – what do I do?	14
- It's quiet and there is nothing to do	15
- A patient / client has complained about their care – what do I do?	15
- I have been involved in a clinical incident – what do I do?	15
- My problem isn't listed?	15
Birmingham Focus Group 'Healthcare Student Placement Toolkit' Working Party Members	
Party Members	16
Consultation	17

Welcome to the Healthcare Student Placement Toolkit

- **Introduction**

This toolkit has been designed to help support you whilst on placement across Birmingham and Solihull. The aims of the toolkit are to:

- Help you maximise your learning whilst on placement
- Identify sources of support
- Answer any placement related questions you may have

- **What is a placement?**

A placement is where a healthcare student applies theory to practice and develops practical skills and professional competence / proficiency in the work place to enable them to achieve their learning outcomes and gain professional registration.

- **Supernumerary status**

As a student you are supernumerary when on placement. Supernumerary status means that you are not counted in the workforce numbers. This is to enable you to take advantage of any learning opportunities as they arise. This does not mean that your role is purely observational, as you will participate in client care under supervision. The more you participate in client and general health care, the more opportunities you will have to learn.

- **Accountability**

The registered practitioner with whom you are working is accountable to their regulating body for the consequences of any acts or omissions on your part. You must therefore work under their supervision. It is therefore important to inform your assessor / supervisor if you have any concerns about your ability or confidence to carry out any task. Although you cannot be called to account by your professional regulating body until you are qualified, you can still be called to account by the patient, your university or the law.

- **Professional behaviour**

You must behave in a way that upholds the reputation of your profession, the organisation in which you are working and your university. Behaviour that compromises this reputation, even if it is not directly connected to your professional practice, may question your suitability to continue on your course.

Professional behaviour encompasses not only clinical practice, but includes: being polite; punctual; appropriately dressed; adhering to policies and procedures; maintaining confidentiality and showing respect to others at all times (please refer to your professional code of conduct).

- **Patients' /clients' wishes**

You should seek consent from patients and clients (in conjunction with your assessor / supervisor where appropriate) to deliver care. You must respect the wishes of patients and clients, so be prepared to leave if asked to, in such circumstances inform your assessor / supervisor.

- **Assessors and supervisors**

Whilst on placement you will be allocated an assessor / supervisor. The public have a right to expect healthcare practitioners to be safe and competent and it is the role of your assessor / supervisor to ensure you meet this criteria. You need to meet with your assessor/ supervisor within the first week of your placement to plan how you will achieve your learning outcomes. It is important to arrange to receive feedback on your progress during your placement (see your university protocol) so that any difficulties you are experiencing are identified as soon as possible. The timing of your any assessments must be conducted in accordance with your university guidelines.

Please note: nursing students are expected to work with their assessor for a minimum average of 40% of their total working hours. Ensure you check the requirements for your professional group.

- **Practice Placement Managers (PPM)**

There is at least one PPM working in each Trust within the Birmingham and Black Country area. A PPM is a senior healthcare professional who works for a Trust and provides advice, support and guidance to health care students and assessors /supervisors in practice. The PPM's work differently depending upon the size of the organisation, number of placement areas, and number of students allocated to placements. Some offer induction meetings, study days, workshops etc. - so look for their posters within the clinical area.

The PPMs are there for you, so if you are having any problems whilst on placement that you are not able to resolve or just want to talk to someone outside of the placement area then contact the Trust PPM.

All PPM's have a telephone extension number and e-mail. Some carry pagers, bleeps or mobiles – this varies between Trusts. Placement staff should be able to tell you how to contact them. If they can't or you don't feel able to ask, then the local switchboard or your university placement allocations department will have the information. (For nursing students in particular, PPMs should be the first contact point for problems related to practice).

- **Working hours**

To maximise your learning, you will be expected to adopt the working patterns of your professional group and placement area. This may include working unsociable hours. If you are going to be unavoidably late please notify the placement area as soon as possible, as staff may be waiting for you thereby delaying client care.

You are entitled to an in-work rest break of 20 minutes if the working day is longer than 6 hours.

- **Off-duty requests**

If you work shifts whilst on placement you may want to request to work / not work certain shifts. Any request needs to be made as soon as possible as clinical staff may prepare the off-duty rosters 4-6 weeks in advance. Shifts will also have been rostered to maximise your opportunity to work with your assessor / supervisor. Late requests can mean a major off-duty review for the staff and can be time-consuming. This means that you will need to contact the area before your placement actually starts. The clinical areas are not obliged to meet your off-duty requests but the sooner you request them the greater the chance of them being accommodated.

- **Part-time job**

Your placement hours must take priority over any part-time job you may hold. It may be possible to negotiate your placement hours with your assessor however this cannot be guaranteed. Any negotiation must be done well in advance.

Remember that under the European Working Time Directive individuals should not be working more than 48 hours per week.

- **Sickness reporting**

As soon as you know you are going to be off sick inform your university in accordance with their sickness and absence guidelines.

If your university guidelines require you to inform the placement area, make a note of who you spoke to, the time and date. You must also inform the placement area of the date you will return, if this is not possible, keep the area up to date with your situation. Placement staff may themselves choose to inform the Trust PPM and the university. Failure to follow your university guidelines will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded. Sickness and absence may affect the assessment process. If you have any concerns refer to your university guidelines.

NB

If you are a seconded / sponsored student you must comply with your employing Trust sickness policy as you are still a Trust employee. You will need to contact your line manager with regards to Trust and Doctor's sick notes.

- **Special leave / compassionate leave / carers' leave**

This should only be granted by the staff at your university (see your student handbook). If the need for this type of leave arises out of university hours, discuss your requirements with the clinical staff. If leave is taken university staff must be informed as soon as possible.

NB

Seconded / sponsored students must abide by their employing Trusts' policies and procedures and must contact their Trust PPM.

- **Bank holiday working**

Please consult your course handbook / course plans to see if you take bank holidays as they fall, or if they are included in your holiday entitlement which is mapped across your course. If they are included in your holiday entitlement you cannot have them as additional days off.

- **Study days**

The university notifies placement areas of university study days. Occasionally, there may be additional study days, or changes to allocated study days, for which you must produce a letter or a memo from your university. Study leave will not be granted without appropriate evidence.

- **Placement dress code**

On placements where uniform is worn you are expected to adhere to your university uniform policy. If you are going to an area where uniform is not worn, contact the placement directly before you start to find out their dress code. Whether wearing uniform or not, please ensure that your university identity badge is visible to staff and patients / clients.

Uniform should not be worn outside of the placement area (the exception being community placements). This is to prevent cross-infection and to protect you from becoming involved in situations beyond your expertise.

- **Placement documentation**

Where applicable, read your placement documentation before starting the placement so that you understand what is expected of you. The documentation states the learning outcomes and level you need to achieve whilst on placement. It is your responsibility to complete the main parts of the document, including any self-assessment.

It is a good idea to have your assessment document with you at all times when on placement so that you can complete items as the opportunity arises. However, beware leaving it at the placement as there is a risk it may be lost. If your assessor / supervisor is unable to complete your documentation before the end of your placement, arrange a time to return and have it completed as soon as possible after the placement ends.

If you are having problems completing your document and your assessor is unable to help then contact the Trust PPM or your university link tutor.

- **Answering and making telephone calls**

When answering and making telephone calls, always state your name and role. This enables the caller to identify whom they are speaking to. Remember to maintain confidentiality. If you are unsure what information you are allowed to give over the telephone, seek advice from a qualified practitioner.

When taking messages, write them down stating the name of the caller, the time and the date. This will ensure the correct message is passed on.

- **Policies & Procedures**

Different Trusts have different policies and procedures to guide practice. It is important that you familiarise yourself with the relevant ones for the area and adhere to them when on placement. Clinical staff should advise you at the start of the placement which policies and procedures are relevant to your placements, and how to access them.

- **Health and safety**

When on placement it is essential that you adhere to the Trusts' Health and Safety policies and procedures and those of your university. If you sustain an injury whilst on placement, it must be reported to the individual in charge of the area and a clinical incident report completed. Depending upon the nature of the incident you may need to attend a local casualty department, occupational health or your G.P. It is important that the Trust PPM is also notified, as they will need to inform your university. Where appropriate it should be recorded in your student documentation.

- **Pregnant students**

It is in the best interests of you and your unborn child to inform the manager of the placement area and / or the Trust PPM as soon as possible that you are pregnant. This will ensure that any necessary risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety of both of you.

- **Students with disabilities**

If you have a disability and feel that it could affect your placement, discuss your concerns with your personal tutor. It is also recommended that you discuss it with your assessor and/or PPM in order that they can offer the appropriate support.

- **Bullying and harassment / discrimination**

Whilst on placement you should not feel that you are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against in any way. If however you do, please refer to the Trust's local policies and contact the Trust PPM or your university link tutor for advice.

- **Stress**

Although some stress is good for you, balancing the demands of practice and academic work whilst still having a life is difficult. It is important to identify your current sources of stress and identify effective ways of managing them so that you don't end up struggling. You also need to be familiar with the signs and symptoms of stress to help you recognise if you are becoming 'stressed' and take appropriate action.

Possible signs of stress include:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Tearfulness or aggression
- Loss of appetite or over-eating
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety

If you feel that you are becoming 'stressed' consider:

- Talking to your assessor / supervisor
- Seeking advice from the Trust PPM / university link
- Contacting your personal tutor for advice
- Contacting your university counselling service for support
- Seeing your G.P.

- **Tips for a successful placement**

It is your responsibility to learn as much as possible whilst on placement, and although some of the following tips seem obvious, they increase your chance of success:

Before starting the placement:

- Make sure you are familiar with your assessment documentation, the competencies you need to achieve and what the university expects of you for each placement.
- Know your professional code of conduct.
- Contact the placement in advance to discuss the type of placement, working hours, off-duty requests, dress code, car parking, etc.
- Consider your travelling arrangements.

When on placement:

- Be friendly, enthusiastic and professional in your manner.
- Meet with your assessor / supervisor as soon as possible to discuss your learning needs and the clinical staffs expectations.
- Be willing to participate in care and help your colleagues.
- Ask for help when you need it. Always admit when you don't know something.
- Be punctual and adhere to the area's dress code, policies & procedures.
- Get to know the patients / clients, staff and personnel allied to the placement area.
- Take advantage of any learning opportunities internal and external to the placement area.
- Find out what learning opportunities are available to you outside the placement area and take advantage of them.
- Reflection is a valuable learning tool, so take the opportunity to reflect on your experiences e.g. with peers; with your assessor / mentor; keeping a reflective diary.
- Get to know the common conditions patients / clients present with.
- Ask appropriate questions.
- Read the area's student literature.
- Discuss any concerns with the staff as and when they arise.
- When its quiet, or if you are unsure whether there is anything you can do to help, ask the staff what you can do.
- Be appreciative if you are allowed to go early. Do not assume you can.
- Find out who the Trust PPM is and how to contact them.
- Contact the PPM or your link tutor as soon as possible if you are having problems.

- **What can you expect from your placements?**

- Courtesy and respect, and to be treated as a valued member of the multi-disciplinary team.
- Supervision by an appropriately prepared and experienced assessor/ supervisor and other healthcare practitioners.
- Orientation to the area.
- A flexible collaborative approach that acknowledges and responds to your individual learning needs wherever possible.
- A range of learning opportunities.
- Timely feed back on your progress.
- Access to relevant policies and procedures.
- A safe and healthy working environment.
- Access to identified support staff that are the link between the University and clinical areas (PPMs and / or university staff).

- **What do practice staff expect from you?**

- Courtesy, respect, motivation and professional behaviour.
- Students to make an appropriate contribution to patient / client care.
- Students to be pro-active in their learning
- Students to be flexible regarding working hours to enable them to receive maximum supervision from their assessors / supervisors.
- Where applicable, to have access to the student's assessment documentation throughout the allocation.
- Students to report sickness in accordance with university guidelines.
- Students to provide timely evaluation of placements to enable placements to address any issues which may arise.

- **Evaluation of placement areas**

Student evaluations are taken very seriously and it is important that you evaluate placement areas whilst on placement and / or at the university. Clinical staff need to know the negative aspects of their area and how improvements can be made. However, it is equally important for staff to be informed of the positive aspects and what has been useful in helping you achieve your learning outcomes. Therefore, please ensure that your evaluations are constructive and written in a professional manner.

- **Car parking / travelling**

Car parking is limited at most Trusts. It is therefore advisable to find out before starting your placement if there are any facilities for student car parking.

Advice on public transport routes can be obtained from:

Centro West Midlands: 0121 200 2700
www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What do I do if I am failing?**

It is important that you know as soon as possible whether you are able to achieve your competencies. Therefore it is essential that you work with your assessor regularly and arrange to receive feedback on your progress during your placement in accordance with your university guidelines. If your assessor informs you that you may not achieve, an action plan will be devised to help support you and increase your chance of passing. Your assessor will inform the Trust PPM and/or the University Link Tutor for additional support. If you do fail, the failure will be processed according to your university protocol, so it is a good idea to have read this.

Where you feel you have grounds to appeal against the assessment decision, you need to discuss it with the appropriate university staff as soon as possible. However, you can only appeal against procedural inconsistency and not against the professional judgment of the practitioner.

- **How do I fill in my assessment documentation?**

It is important that you attend any 'Preparation for Placement sessions' your university arranges as these may offer guidance on how to complete your documentation. You must also read the assessment documentation, student handbook, portfolio instructions and any other supporting documentation you have been given as these may also help you. If you are still unsure how to complete the document and your assessor is unable to offer any guidance, contact the Trust PPM or university staff for help.

- **What do I do if I witness bad practice?**

Whilst on placement you may come across practice that you consider to be 'bad'. If this happens and you feel able to, ask the practitioner(s) you are working with to explain why they have done something in a particular way. Also explain what your concerns are. For example: 'that's the first time I've seen it done that way – can you explain why it is different'. It may be that the practitioner is able to justify their practice and that although the practice is not what you are used to it is based on safe principles and is not 'bad'.

If you still have concerns or do not feel able to discuss it with the actual practitioner, you could discuss it with your mentor or the area manager. If you do not feel able to approach these people contact the Trust PPM or your link tutor. The PPM will then advise you how to proceed. You will also find advice relating to this issue in your university handbook.

- **Can I have time out of my placement to visit my personal tutor / have a tutorial?**

Appointments to see university staff should be booked outside of placement hours. If this is not possible then you may be able to negotiate leaving placement early or starting late to enable you to attend, however this is at placement staff's discretion.

- **Can I go early?**

Placement staff may choose to let you go home early. If they do – be appreciative and don't assume that you will be able to do this every shift. Beware asking to go early as it may appear to the staff that you are not interested in learning and are not committed to your course.

- **Can I work long days?**

It may be possible to work long days whilst on placement, but you need to be guided by your university and it is at the discretion of the placement staff. If you are asked to work long days and don't wish to, you are entitled to refuse. It is good practice when working long days not to work more than two in a row.

Remember a long day consists of fewer hours than two standard shifts and you will need to make up the difference.

- **What if I can't do the hours I have been rostered?**

You are expected to adopt the working patterns of your professional group and placement area however, if you know that you will have difficulty working the hours rostered before starting a placement, contact the Trust placement area to discuss it. If it is not until you get to your placement you discover you will have difficulties, discuss the situation with your assessor / supervisor / trust PPM and / or your Link Tutor. Where possible staff will try to accommodate your needs but they are not obliged to do so. Any adjustments to your working hours must take into consideration assessor contact time, the working pattern of the placement, the availability of learning opportunities within the area, the number of other students allocated to the area and their requests.

- **I don't enjoy working with my assessor / supervisor – what do I do?**

There may be occasions when some working relationships become difficult and cause anxiety. It is important however that we are able to work professionally with such people. If you don't enjoy working with your assessor ask yourself why:

- **Is it because they are asking you too many questions?**

They are probably only doing this to check out what you know and enhance your learning.

- **Is it because they appear to have unreasonable expectations of you for your level of training?**

You will need to discuss what they expect from you and ensure they are aware of your previous experiences and abilities, so they can adjust their expectations to your style of training.

- **Is it because they don't appear to have time for you?**

Consider their workload and ask how you could assist to ensure you maximize your learning opportunities.

- **Is there a personality clash?**

We all need to work with different personalities and this may take time for both of you to adjust.

With each of these issues, if you feel able then it is best to discuss the situation with your assessor / supervisor directly. Alternatively you could seek advice from the individual responsible for students in the placement area or the placement manager. If you do not feel able to do this contact the Trust PPM / university link for advice. Do not be afraid to raise your concerns as they may highlight training needs for some clinical staff.

-

- **I haven't been allocated an assessor / supervisor – what do I do?**

If you have not been allocated an assessor, draw it to the attention of the individual responsible for students in your placement area or the manager. If you do not feel able to do this, or are still not allocated an assessor contact the Trust PPM or University Link Tutor for advice.

-

- **I am not enjoying my placement – what do I do?**

During your healthcare education, it is likely that you will prefer some placements to others. Although you may dislike some areas it does not mean you cannot learn and is not a reason for requesting a change of placement. All placements are audited for their suitability for students. If you have any concerns about a placement, contact the PPM or your University Link Tutor.

- **Its quiet and there is nothing to do**

There is always something to do:

- Get to know your clients and their families.
- Get to know the conditions with which your patients / clients have presented
- Offer assistance to your fellow staff
- Gain insight into the roles of other professionals involved in patient / client care
- Take advantage of learning opportunities outside the placement area which will enhance your learning?
- Get to know the physical environment in which you are working and familiarise yourself with equipment.
- Access any teaching packages available to the placement

- **A patient / client has complained about their care – what do I do?**

If a patient / client or their family complains to you about their care, listen to them and inform them that you will fetch the individual in charge of the area to speak to them. If the individual in charge is unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, they will contact a more senior person and / or involve the Patient Advisory Liaison Service (PALS) and complete an incident form.

- **I have been involved in a clinical incident – what do I do?**

Any clinical incident (e.g. drug errors, complaints etc) must be reported to the individual in charge of the area and an incident form completed. You will also need to inform your assessor / supervisor. Depending upon the nature of the incident you may be asked to submit a statement and / or be interviewed. Please contact the Trust PPM or university staff so they can offer you appropriate support.

- **What other support is available to me?**

Many universities have Independent Advice Centres based within the Student's Union, which are able to provide additional support. Seek out contact details from your university. Most universities also have a Student Services Department which is able to advise students on how to deal with numerous problems. They can also put you in touch with counselling services if so required. Again seek out contact details from your university.

- **My problem isn't listed?**

If you have a problem that has not been discussed, contact the Trust PPM / University Link Tutor who will do their best to help you.

- **Birmingham Focus Group 'Healthcare Student Placement Toolkit' Working Party Members**

Ava Gordon

Practice Placement Manager, South Birmingham Primary Care Trust.

Ruth Gilks

Practice Placement Manager, Good Hope Hospital NHS Trust.

Jo Guy (Lead)

Practice Placement Manager, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Sue Hine

Practice Placement Manager at Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust.

Clare Knowles (Deputy Lead)

Practice Placement Manager, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Caroline Oliver

Practice Placement Manager, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care.

Trevor Parker

Practice Placement Manager, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.

Stephanie Reynolds

Practice Placement Manager, North Birmingham Primary Care Trust.

Mary Rooke

Practice Placement Manager, Birmingham Women's healthcare NHS Trust.

- **Consultation with Nurses, Midwives, Allied Health Professionals, Healthcare Scientists, Pharmacists, Social Workers, Healthcare Students and local healthcare education providers across Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country**

Out of a total of 95 individuals, responses were gained from the following:

Christina Anderson

Physiotherapy, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Rosemary Bracher

Student Nurse, University of Central England.

Davina Brazier

Physiotherapy, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Kath Catty

Nursing, University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust.

Alison Coates

Nursing, University of Birmingham.

John Churchman

Radiographer, The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust.

Bill Daly

Nursing, University of Birmingham.

Karl Emms

Nursing, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Karen Fenna- Jones

Microbiology, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Louise Hunt

Nursing, University of Central England.

Ashleigh Lowther

Student Nurse, University of Central England.

Elaine Marrey

Physiotherapy, The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust.

Pam Morley

Nurse, University of Central England.

Rachel Pope

Physiotherapy, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Gill Rose

Speech and Language Therapy, University of Central England.

Jane Russell

Speech and Language Therapy, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Anne Stamps

Occupational Therapy, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Tracey Starkey-Moore

Nursing, Birmingham Heartlands and Solihull NHS Trust.

Mel Stewart

Physiotherapy, University of Birmingham.

Claire Stone

Student Nurse, University of Central England.

Sarah Street

Audiology, Aston University.

Dave Thompson

Nursing, Dudley South and Beacon and Castle Primary Care Trusts.

Lesley Townsend

Audiology, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

Michelle Vance

Nursing, The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust.

Harry Wallace

Student Nurse, University of Central England.

Birmingham and Black Country Strategic Health Authority / University of Central England Faculty of Health - Healthcare Quality (Strategic Planning) Group
Birmingham and Black Country Strategic Health Authority /University of Birmingham Healthcare Quality Group

- Further consultation was performed in June 2006. Responses were gained from:

17 UCE healthcare students from Adult Branch (Dip HE & BSc), Mental Health Branch (Dip HE), Child Branch (Dip HE & BSc), Midwifery (BSc), Graduate Diploma & Operating Department Practitioner courses. Their responses were anonymous.

Responses were also gained from staff who work within "The Advice Centre" based within the Student's Union at UCE. Again responses were anonymous.

