

## **FAQs – Practice Learning Review**

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are for stakeholders - professionals, students, practice learning partners, educators and the public. This is a live document, which means it will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as we receive more questions about the work.

### **Practice learning review and the independent findings into the NMC's culture**

**Q. Do you anticipate that the recent independent findings into the NMC's culture will impact the work that is produced as part of the practice learning review?**

The practice learning review continues as planned. There is a governance structure in place which includes a project board, the external steering group, and public and student advisory groups to ensure the work is of high quality.

Please note that the NMC and its Council has accepted all 36 of the report's recommendations in full. It has already started to address some of the regulatory issues identified and is developing a multi-year culture transformation programme which will be rolled out over the coming months. More information can be found on our [webpage](#).

### **Scope of practice learning review**

**Q. Is the Standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA) model within scope for review?**

The SSSA model is not specifically in scope but will be considered within the context of practice learning. We have reviewed international models and gained feedback about the UK approach. The discovery phase of the review is examining the evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to Council in early 2025.

**Q. Practice learning research isn't as prominent as academic education research. How can this be addressed?**

The NMC commissions its own research into its standards and works collaboratively with a variety of key stakeholders. Co-production between key stakeholders in practice and academia will drive this agenda.

**Q. Will a review of nursing and midwifery educator roles be included in the practice learning review, including investment and parity of roles within health and social care?**

The Royal College of Midwives recently completed [some work](#) on this.

We're currently within the discovery phase of the practice learning review. This means we're examining evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

**Q. Academic assessors cannot be the same person for all three years. Smaller universities with small teams can find this difficult. Will this be reviewed?**

We are reviewing practice learning as a whole rather than the specifics set out in the standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA).

**Q. Do you think that the removal of the 40 percent standard for working with a mentor has left students feeling as though they do not 'belong' to a particular supervisor? Has this led to a deterioration of the student learning experience and will this be explored as part of the review?**

We are exploring the experiences of students, practice supervisors and practice assessors as part of this review. The discovery phase of the practice learning review is examining the evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

**Q. Will the review revisit the supervision requirements for elective and overseas placements?**

Elective opportunities are to be encouraged. The standards for supervision and assessment (SSSA) must be in place otherwise it is an observational placement, albeit with value.

**Q. Will proficiency attainment be part of the review, for example, achieving 40 births in midwifery?**

This is a review of practice learning in its entirety for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students. The discovery phase of the practice learning review is currently gathering evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

**Q. Will the review consider a system-wide experience for practice learning to enable students to understand and consider roles in primary care/social care, private, voluntary and independent organisations?**

This is a review of all aspects of practice learning and the elements within it for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students. We have asked the Nuffield Trust to include a range of practice learning experiences alongside the NHS including social care, primary care and a range of private, voluntary and independent organisations.

**Q. How does the NHS England work 'Developing a National Framework to Embed the NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment across Nursing and Midwifery' fit alongside the practice learning review?**

We will consider this work as part of our review of practice learning.

**Q. Will the use of digital clinical learning be considered as part of the review?**

Digital learning will be considered as part of the review. The discovery phase of the practice learning review is examining the evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

**Q. The quality of the learning experience is impacted by many factors. For example, culture can influence the student experience, and practice learning is a vital conversation for placement providers' development. How can we influence this more effectively?**

The education standards require co-production between approved education institutions (AEIs) and practice learning providers to ensure appropriate practice learning experience. However, this review is looking at all aspects of practice learning and the elements within it for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students, and will inform key lines of enquiry going forward.

## **Practice learning review findings**

**Q. Have your findings indicated anything about which factors enable and inhibit practice learning?**

We are awaiting the independent report from the Nuffield Trust. We will be able to share more insights once the report is published later this year.

**Q. What have your findings shown in terms of nursing-field specific proficiencies and will there be any recommendations based on this?**

The Nuffield Trust has conducted field specific focus groups as part of their independent research. We are awaiting their report which will be published later this year. We will be able to share more insights then.

**Q. Will the NMC support practice learning opportunities within other pillars of practice for nursing for example, more leadership, management, research and education opportunities?**

Students can undertake practice learning opportunities in any health and care settings where they can meet the proficiencies needed to join the register. All practice learning opportunities must be in line with the standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA). However, we will use the practice learning review to explore this further. The discovery phase of the practice learning review is examining the evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

**Q. Have any findings emerged about the impact of cost of living on practice learning for students?**

The discovery phase of the practice learning review is examining the evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

## **Implementation of changes**

**Q. When do you anticipate that any changes will be integrated into practice?**

The findings from the Nuffield Trust's report, the [evaluation of simulated practice learning](#) for pre-registration nursing programmes, and the NMC's [education quality assurance work](#) will inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

After bringing recommendations to Council, we plan to work to identify innovative and collaborative approaches to supporting practice learning that are currently being used within nursing and midwifery programmes. This will enable approved education institutions and their practice learning partners to share insights into the ways they support students and manage student learning in practice.

## **Simulated practice learning**

**Q. Why is there such a difference between the acceptance of simulated learning practice hours in nursing compared to midwifery?**

Midwifery education uses simulation extensively within theory and for certain elements such as some proficiencies. During our last public consultation, the use of simulation to contribute to practice learning hours was not supported for midwifery.

**Q. Do you anticipate any changes to [guidance](#) around simulated practice learning hours, and would these changes be implemented?**

The [evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#) has been published on the NMC website. This evaluation will contribute to the discovery phase of the practice learning review and inform key lines of enquiry.

**Q. How will you assure equity within simulated practice learning?**

It is for approved education institutions (AEIs) working in partnership with their practice learning partners (PLPs) and employer partners. to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is not impacted within their curricula, as reflected in Part one of our [standards](#).

Our [evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#) will contribute to the discovery phase of the practice learning review and inform key lines of enquiry.

**Q. How will Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) be supported to provide any recommendations that come out for simulated practice?**

We recently published our [evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#). The findings are based on the experiences of 19 AEIs that are approved to deliver up to 600 hours of simulated practice learning (SPL), and includes feedback from students, people who use services and their carers, practice supervisors and assessors, practice learning partners (PLPs) and academic staff. We'll consider this evaluation alongside the independent research being carried out by The Nuffield Trust as part of our practice learning review.

It will support and inform AEIs, employers, PLPs and other stakeholders in their development, implementation and evaluation of simulated practice. We will also have an extensive communication strategy and this is likely to include webinars.

**Q. Midwifery practice learning is centred around meeting proficiencies. If students are carrying out simulated practice learning, as was introduced during COVID, can this continue and can those hours count?**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, for nursing programmes only, we introduced emergency standards allowing education institutions and their practice learning partners to deliver a proportion of practice learning through simulation. Following an extensive review, we have now made this a permanent standard.

Meanwhile, the midwifery standards are clear that whilst simulation is limited in practice, innovative theoretical learning is encouraged. Midwifery uses simulation extensively within theory and for specific elements including hard to achieve proficiencies, but it doesn't count towards practice learning hours in the current standards.

Simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes must meet the NMC standards and be approved by the NMC.

Nursing and midwifery students must continue to need to meet all the proficiencies we set to complete their programme and join our register.

The discovery phase of the practice learning review is examining the evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

**Q. How can we ensure that our simulated practice learning (SPL) is acceptable seeing as NMC do not have standards for SPL such as the [Association for](#)**

## [Simulated Practice in Healthcare \(ASPiH\)](#) and the [International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning \(INACSL\)](#)?

Simulated practice learning must meet the same standards as any other form of practice learning. We also out principles for [simulated practice learning](#) which must be met. However, the way SPL is delivered can be supported by standards such as those set out by ASPiH and INACSL. Our [supporting information](#) provides guidance for the implementation of simulation and simulated practice learning.

## Practice learning hours

**Q. Do you anticipate that there will be a reduction in clinical practice hours? If so, how do you anticipate increasing the quality of the remaining education and learning opportunities?**

We are considering practice learning in its entirety and not for practice hours alone. We will communicate our next steps and future work after considering the findings of the discovery work - this includes the Nuffield Trust's independent research, our evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration [nursing programmes](#), and work undertaken as part of education quality assurance.

**Q. What is the NMC's stance on student self-directed and homebased learning being included in practice hours?**

We have begun the process of co-producing policy statements on reflection and simulated practice learning with stakeholders. Practice learning must meet the standards for practice learning within the pre-registration programme standards, and the standards of student supervision and assessment (SSSA).

**Q. Do you anticipate any changes to practice learning hours? If so, will that impact simulated practice learning (SPL) hours?**

We are considering practice learning in its entirety and not practice hours alone. We will communicate our next steps and future work after considering the findings of the discovery work - this includes the Nuffield Trust's independent research, our evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration [nursing programmes](#), and work undertaken as part of education quality assurance.

**Q. How will you make sure students are not disadvantaged if the research suggests lowering the number of practice learning hours?**

We are considering practice learning in its entirety and not practice hours alone. Equitable experience ensuring students are not disadvantaged is integral to our education and training standards. The discovery phase of the practice learning review is gathering evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to Council in early 2025.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

### **Q. How will you ensure stakeholder involvement represents a diverse population?**

We have an independent steering group made up of members who represent the four counties across the UK. Two advisory groups feed into the independent steering group; a public advisory group and a student advisory group. Details of these groups can be found [here](#).

The Nuffield Trust's independent research has also taken active steps to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders.

## Curriculum

### **Q. How will this review help approved education institutions (AEIs) and providers to modernise the nursing and midwifery curricula to ensure our workforce is fit for purpose for our future demographics?**

The NMC sets the standards on which the curricula is based. We expect programmes to develop evidence-based curricula which takes account of local context and population. The [standards framework for nursing and midwifery education](#) requires that programmes are designed, developed, delivered, evaluated and co-produced with people who use service and other stakeholders (1.12).

## Apprenticeships

### **Q. With the increased emphasis on apprenticeships, are you reviewing the need for pre-registration nurses to have supernumerary practice learning time (PLT)? It would be good to have consistency among the professions backed up by evidence of effectiveness.**

The practice learning review is exploring all aspects of practice learning. This includes supernumerary status and protected learning time. The discovery phase of the practice learning review is gathering evidence to inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

### **Q. Will there be any research into the difference between direct entry and apprenticeship students, and the disparity around practice learning/placements, particularly for students in private, independent and voluntary organisation (PIVO) settings, and the barriers to accessing external placements?**

This is not in scope at present, but we are cognisant that work is being done in this area by our stakeholders.

## **Test of Competence**

**Q. How far is evidence from Test of Competence (TOC) outcomes for nurses who do not have the required number of hours, but pass the TOC, being utilised?**

The TOC is a separate process we use to assess the skills and knowledge of internationally educated professionals applying to join our register for the first time, or for professionals from the UK rejoining the register after a long period away from practice. There is no link between the number of hours required for undergraduate programmes.

## **Education quality assurance**

**Q. How will the NMC education quality assurance and practice learning evaluation dovetail or align with work undertaken regarding workforce, training and education at NHSE and equivalents in the three other nations?**

We are currently undertaking a separate review of Education Quality Assurance (EdQA) and working with our new partner, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), on improving our EdQA processes.

The Nuffield Trust independent research has explored the quality assurance of practice learning across the four countries of the UK, and internationally. We will also be including evidence and findings from mandatory exceptional reporting as part of the review.

The discovery phase of the practice learning review is gathering evidence inform key lines of enquiry for next steps which we anticipate bringing as recommendations to our Council in early 2025.

## **Financial support**

**Q. What assurances can the NMC give on its commitment to work with central Government on any findings which may involve the need for financial investment for, approved education institutions such as resourcing for simulated practice learning?**

Some findings from the review may touch on areas that our outside of the NMC's remit as an independent regulator, such as financial support. However, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to feedback intelligence in this area.



## Staying informed

**Q. Will the initial key findings from the individual workstreams be shared as they are reported?**

Yes, we will share our findings and next steps over the coming months. We also share updates with our Community of Interest. You can sign up to the Community of Interest [here](#).