



National Standards for Practice-based Learning

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NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

Rationale for the development of National Standards For Practice-based Learning

This document brings together what is already available in terms of standards and reflects the wealth of good practice across the UK.

Why?

1. This document is an opportunity to capture all standards in one place, endorsed by the professional body. Generic standards have been developed by external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Health Professions Council (HPC), but it is important to have speech and language therapy-specific practice-based learning standards.
2. This document aims to encompass all the necessary requirements of external quality assurance, so that adherence to these standards will meet requirements from all stakeholders.

Benefits to Higher Education Institutions

1. Universities have their own quality assurance protocols in place, which include practice-based learning, but these are usually generic. Profession-specific standards will enable universities to identify and monitor the quality of speech and language therapy placements.
2. These Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) endorsed standards will enable universities to secure funding and resources for:
 - Placement coordinators and administrators;
 - Continued tutor support for placement learning, which is currently continuously being eroded;
 - Support/study days for placement educators;
 - Maintenance of essential links with other speech and

language therapy courses and with other health professionals.

3. The Standards will inform the design of pre-registration courses, which currently have practice-based education at their core. This is more essential than ever as multi-professional courses and new courses emerge, seeking HPC approval and RCSLT certification. Because the Standards relate to competencies and QAA Benchmarks, they will be a valuable source of reference to HEI staff writing practice-based education programmes, in order to ensure that students' practice-based education prepares them for the profession.

AIM

These Standards for Practice-based Learning aim to be an explicit articulation of the standards associated with all aspects of practice-based learning, involving all partners in the process: the higher education institution, the placement provider, individual placement educator and the student. The Standards are intended to ensure the patient/client is the central focus of the student's learning experience and that practice-based learning should foster a culture of reflective practice. They allow for different educational philosophies, but include a statement of the overarching values, beliefs and attitudes underpinning practice-based learning.

The terms used are as follows:

HEI refers to the higher education institution where the speech and language therapy pre-registration course is located.

Placement provider refers to the speech and language therapy service, which is providing the practice-based opportunity.

Placement educator refers to the individual speech and language therapist who is acting as the educator on the placement. *In a small service, the placement provider and the placement educator could be the same person.*

Student refers to the pre-registration speech and language therapy student who is undertaking practice-based learning opportunities, as part of his/her course.

Trust has been used as a generic term to identify the placement provider/educator's employing organisation.

VALUES, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Whilst there is a consensus across the health professions on the importance of quality practice-based learning for students, there are also profession-specific values, beliefs, and attitudes, which are important to present at the beginning of any statement of profession-specific standards.

A core value is mutual respect for all partners. Central to this is a priority at all times for the well being of the patient/client and compliance with the ethical codes around confidentiality and consent.

Students are perceived, treated and respected as part of a collegiate partnership between HEI, placement providers and the individual placement educator. It is recognised that students bring value to the learning partnership.

It is appreciated that students will have an individual style and pace of learning and will participate in a range of learning opportunities with their placement educators, in order to develop appropriately across all key areas of competence.

Students are constructively supported by the HEI, placement providers and individual placement educators in the development of professional autonomy, professional and personal skills.

Students will move through the curriculum developing more self-direction and autonomy as they gain experience. The placement educator plays a central role in facilitating the student's learning opportunities. Part of the placement educator's role is to help the student access and apply relevant theoretical knowledge for practice. The placement educator will be appropriately prepared and supported

by the HEI for taking on this role, and for effectively managing the placement educator/student relationship.

THE FRAMEWORK

The framework is divided into six sections.

Section one

Practice-based learning and the curriculum

Includes curriculum design, organisation and content in respect of practice-based learning.

Section two

Preparation for placement

Includes all aspects of sourcing, selecting and assigning placements. It also includes activities before placements start, once they have been sourced and assigned.

Section three

The placement

This encompasses all activity during the placement, i.e. learning methods; patients/clients; range; difficulty; experience; dealing with difficulties. It also includes standards of assessment of student achievement of practice-based learning.

Section four

After placement

This includes debriefing, action if the student has failed to reach required standards and communication of outcomes.

Section five

Learning resources to support placement activity

This aims to reflect the physical resources, such as materials and library and human resources, including the HEI tutor, the placement educator and placement provider.

Section six

Quality monitoring, management and enhancement

This section is not the only place where quality management and enhancement standards are located. These pertain to procedures arising once placement ends.

Within each section, the standards appropriate and most relevant for HEIs, placement providers and placement educators, and students are stated, under their own sub-section.

1. SECTION ONE PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

Higher education institution

- 1.1. The HEI is responsible for determining all aspects of course design and delivery, and ensuring that the learning outcomes of a pre-registration speech and language therapy course can be met. This will be planned, developed and implemented in collaboration with placement providers and placement educators.
- 1.2. The course will have an integrative approach to the application of theory and practice, in line with the QAA Speech and Language Therapy Benchmark and the HPC Standards of Education and Training underpinned by RCSLT's curriculum guidance.
- 1.3. The HEI will work in partnership with placement providers and placement educators in the design, documentation and implementation of practice-based learning, including the timing of placements.
- 1.4. The HEI will have a clear statement about the student's responsibilities to fulfil the requirements of practice-based learning.
- 1.5. The HEI will have agreed policies for dealing with issues or difficulties that could arise as a result of the practice education. These policies will provide guidance on the procedures to be followed and the support available to each placement partner.
- 1.6. The HEI will provide guidelines for supporting all placement partners when a student does not reach the practice-based learning standards.
- 1.7. Courses are designed with different exit points during the duration of the course. Students who decide that speech and language therapy is not a suitable profession for them, will be able to exit at specified points, with academic credit (i.e.

successful academic award), without having to successfully complete a placement or redo a failed placement. This may include changing courses.

- 1.8 HEIs will make it explicit that a student, described at 1.7, will not be eligible to be a certified member of RCSLT or eligible for registration from HPC.
- 1.9 The course regulations will allow students' resit opportunities, in line with the HEI's regulations.

2. SECTION TWO PREPARATION FOR PLACEMENT

All partners

- 2.1 All parties in the placement education process should be aware at all times of risks that occur in normal working environments and assess risk as appropriate following NHS and HEI guidelines.

Higher education institution

- 2.2 Sourcing, selecting and allocating placements are normally the responsibility of the HEI, devolved to the placement co-ordinator. This involves establishing networks and liaising with placement providers and students.
- 2.3 Local policies and procedures will be agreed between the HEI and the placement provider with respect to time scales and methods of communication, including alerting the Placement providers in appropriate time as to the likely number of placements that will be sought during each academic year. Also, timing for completion of documentation will be made by the HEI.
- 2.4 HEIs will seek input from local placement providers when designing placements in order to maximise capacity.

- 2.5 The sourcing of placements will also include options for additional placements required for failing students or those required to have additional practice-based learning opportunities.
- 2.6 Where students are involved in sourcing placements, selection procedures will be made clear by the HEI.
- 2.7 Where a student has a disability, the HEI will be advised by the HEI's disability adviser on how best to meet the placement learning needs of the student. The HEI will inform placement providers of any known issues. This will involve liaison with the student and agreement on disclosure of any issues that would impact on the risk assessment of the student's practice-based learning.
- 2.8 The HEI will make clear the requirements for working within the approved codes of ethics, police checks, and health and safety issues. This may involve the provision of forms and checklists for students and placement educators.
- 2.9 The HEI will be responsive to the risk assessment of specific placement locations and patient/client groups.
- 2.10 The HEI will inform students as to their role in risk assessment, including their responsibilities in alerting the HEI to any changes in circumstances.
- 2.11 The HEI will provide guidance for students on how to best prepare for placements practically, academically and professionally.
- 2.12 The HEI will provide a pre-placement briefing for students with supporting documentation.

- 2.13 The HEI will provide guidance for placement educators on how to facilitate students to learn most effectively while on placement. This will include guidance on the process and timing of feedback throughout the placement. It will, where appropriate, provide individual student-specific information.
- 2.14 The HEI will specify the timing and form of monitoring and feedback required between the placement educator and student. Specific documentation will be provided by the HEI to facilitate this process.
- 2.15 Where several placement educators are involved in a placement, the HEI will specify the recommended maximum number of placement educators. Exceptionally, where the number is exceeded, it will be recognised that further liaison will take place between the HEI tutor, student and placement provider.
- 2.16 The HEI will provide clear guidelines and procedures that the placement provider, placement educator and student follow when a student experiences difficulties.
- 2.17 The HEI will, in partnership with the placement provider, provide training for placement educators in practice-based learning. This will be in the form of an initial training followed by on-going training opportunities.

3. SECTION THREE PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

Higher education institution

- 3.1 The HEI tutor will liaise with the placement provider regarding arrangements for tutor support during the placement. Details of this support will be clearly stated and methods of communication made explicit.

- 3.2 Tailored HEI support will be provided as appropriate where the student and/or placement educator or placement provider requires additional support.
- 3.3 The HEI will establish audit procedures, which will maintain and develop quality placements.
- 3.25 The student will engage actively in learning, in order to develop his/her integration of theory to practice.
- 3.26 The student will take ongoing responsibility for developing skills of accurate self-reflection, evaluation and monitoring, throughout all placements.
- 3.27 The student will be responsible at all times for their own and their patients/ clients' health and safety within the placement and should not compromise the health and safety of the patients/clients.
- 3.28 The student will recognise that the needs of the patient/client will take priority at all times.
- 3.29 Where different models of placement exist, such as paired placements, the student will be aware of his/her responsibility to all parties, including student peers.
- 3.30 The student has a responsibility for alerting the placement educator and HEI of any factors negatively affecting his/her learning.
- 3.31 The student will take responsibility for alerting the placement educator, and/or placement provider and/or HEI if the agreed feedback and monitoring does not take place.
- 3.32 The student will take responsibility for being knowledgeable about the assessment process and criteria for the placement, and using that knowledge when seeking guidance on progress and self-reflecting.

- 3.33 The student will seek an “end of placement” review with his/her placement educator/s to review the learning and assess future learning needs.

4. SECTION FOUR AFTER THE PLACEMENT

Higher education institution

- 4.1 The HEI will have a transparent, documented process of ‘post placement feedback’ in order that all partners involved in the student’s practice-based learning have an opportunity to reflect on what learning, if any, would be valuable in the future. This will involve the placement provider and placement educators.
- 4.2 Learning that emerges from post placement feedback will influence further training of placement educators and HEI tutors.
- 4.3 The HEI will give students the opportunity to be involved in reflective discussion and planning of their future practice-based learning.
- 4.4 The HEI will provide clear guidelines and procedures that placement provider, placement educator and student all follow when a student does not reach the required level of competence.
- 4.5 Each student who does not reach the required level of competence will be directly guided from the HEI on future action and options, with reference to university and course regulations and professional requirements.
- 4.6 The HEI has a responsibility to ensure that a student who fails a placement has an opportunity to seek guidance as to whether speech and language therapy is the profession of choice for them. The student will be clear that he/she has a choice to progress to a resit placement, if the regulations allow this.

- 4.7 A student who wishes to exit without a professional award will have his/her choice respected and will be supported in this.

**5. SECTION FIVE
LEARNING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PLACEMENT**

Higher education institution

- 5.1 Applicants to speech and language therapy courses will be informed of any travel and financial implications of practice-based learning, in advance of accepting an offer.
- 5.2 The HEI will ensure that the student is aware of the financial support available for attending placement.
- 5.3 All HEI placement tutors will be registered with the HPC and should hold certified membership of the RCSLT.
- 5.4 There will be adequate access to, and support from HEI staff, library, placement resources and materials, while the student is on placement, although it is recognised that logistic constraints will exist.

**6. SECTION SIX
QUALITY MONITORING, MANAGEMENT AND
ENHANCEMENT**

- 6.1 All partners will comply with quality monitoring processes and procedures within their own organisations, with a view to both the audit and enhancement of practice-based learning.
- 6.2 The outcomes from all quality monitoring and enhancement processes and procedures focussing on practice-based learning will be made available to all partners.

- 6.3 HEIs will inform students through their course-level or university-level documentation of the appeals, grievance, and complaints procedures, in respect of practice-based learning.

Where the student has to resit a placement:

- 6.4 The HEI will make explicit the type, length and regulations governing a resit placement to students, placement providers and placement educators.
- 6.5 The placement provider and placement educators will be informed if a placement is a resit placement.



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APPENDIX 1

Methodology

The RCSLT Education and Workforce Development Board established a working group. The group included a newly-qualified speech and language therapist, experienced placement coordinators from HEIs, and experienced placement providers and placement educators, reflecting the four countries.

The standards were developed using all available sources of current and best practice as captured in HEI, RCSLT, HPC, QAA and NHS documentation. A working framework was developed. The sources were reviewed, analysed and coded, which resulted in the extraction of common standards. The framework was then refined in light of the common standards.

A student study day, held by RCSLT in February 2005, allowed for the collation of student views as to what should be included in national standards for practice-based learning. A forum was held in May 2005, where the resulting feedback produced a penultimate draft of the Standards. Following a consultation phase and subsequent modifications, a final draft was circulated once more for consultation. The resulting final document was then agreed by the Education and Workforce Development Board and sent to Council for approval in December 2005.

APPENDIX 2

Context

The RCSLT competencies frameworks relate to three layers of professional practice – the tasks, the process, and professional judgement and decision-making. This maps clearly to the QAA Benchmark statement.

The Benchmark statement for speech and language therapy states that: *a student's profile takes into account the following three skills and abilities.*

- *Ability to understand, critically evaluate and apply relevant theoretical knowledge to clinical practice;*
- *Technical skills such as the manipulation of assessment and therapy tools, materials and the environment;*
- *Interpersonal and communication abilities, used to set up and maintain a therapeutic atmosphere, where patients/clients are facilitated in an optimum communication environment.*

The introduction to the HPC Standards of Proficiency (SOP) states that *although students may only have practised 'under supervision and not independently,' they must be confident that they can meet the standards of proficiency when they work without supervision. The SOPs are structured around standards of:*

1. *Expectations of a speech and language therapist*
 - *Professional autonomy and accountability*
 - *Professional relationships*
2. *Skills required for the application of practice*
 - *Identification and assessment of health and social care needs*
 - *Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs*
 - *Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions*

3. *Knowledge, understanding and skills for speech and language therapy*

It follows therefore that practice-based learning in speech and language therapy should develop skills and abilities in line with the standards stated in the QAA Benchmark and HPC SOPs and articulate with the RCSLT competencies frameworks.

The work on *Communicating Quality 3* should also adopt these RCSLT Standards for Practice-based Learning, providing coherent, integrated professional body guidance on good practice.

Appendix 3

Reading List

Bray, M., Ross, A., Todd, C. (1999) *Speech and Language: Clinical Process and Practice* (New edition in press)

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Appendix 4

Acknowledgements

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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*Steering Group members