Practice learning guidance
Practice educator professional standards questions
(Guidance B)

V0.3
Note: start with v0.1 then increase with each draft, eg, v0.2
When document is approved it becomes v1.0
Any subsequent revisions will be v1.1 etc
Document should be saved with Full Title and version no. eg, Digital Strategy v0.1

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Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<td>TCSW</td>
<td>The College of Social Work</td>
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The Social Work Reform Board decided (link to brief chronology) that social work students should be assessed in practice by registered social workers who are practice educators who meet the Practice Educator Professional Standards.

This section will help you understand the expectations on practice educators, and how existing qualifications and training should be viewed in light of these standards.

1. What are the new Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS)?
   The PEPS were formerly known as the Practice Educator Framework and were developed with the social work sector over a three year period. They were endorsed by the Social Work Development Partnership (Skills for Care, GSCC and CWDC) in September 2009, piloted by 15 projects involving 300 candidates in 2009/10 and endorsed and accepted by the Social Work Reform Board in November 2010. Stewardship of the PEPS now lies with The College of Social Work.

   The PEPS outline two stages of progression for practice educators. Stage 1 practice educators will be able to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students up to but not including the final assessment prior to qualification. Stage 2 practice educators will be able to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students including the final placement.

2. What are the timescales for introducing the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS)?
   The PEPS will come into effect in October 2013 and apply to all placements within the academic year 2013/14 and thereafter.

3. What are the transitional arrangements for PEs who are not registered social workers?
   From October 2015, all PEs of social work students must be registered social workers. These are minimum expectations. Employers and HEIs are free to develop requirements at a higher level individually or collaboratively. Many HEIs are planning to use the PEPS from October 2012. There will be transitional arrangements for practice educators who are not registered social workers (RSWs) until October 2015 (see below table).
### Transitional Arrangements

<table>
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<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
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| **Placement 1/2**  
Normally Practice Educator and/or working towards Stage 1. | First Placement: Practice Educator (ideally RSW*)  
Stage 1 or 2  
* Non-RSWs may continue to practice | First Placement: Practice Educator (ideally RSW*)  
Stage 1 or 2  
* Non-RSWs may continue to practice | First Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 1 or 2 |
| **Final Placement**  
Normally Practice Educator (RSW) and/or working towards Stage 2 | Final Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 2 | Final Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 2 | Final Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 2 |
| **Off-site Practice Educators (working with Practice Supervisors)**  
Normally Practice Educator (RSW) and/or working towards Stage 2 | Any Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 2 | Any Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 2 | Any Placement: Practice Educator (RSW)  
Stage 2 |
| **Current social work degree requirements**  
(and working towards new standards) | New PEPS (& transitional arrangements for non-RSWs at Stage 1) | New PEPS (& transitional arrangements for non-RSWs at Stage 1) | Practice Educator Professional Standards |

N.B. All PEs in training should be supported by a Stage 2 practice educator/mentor. With these arrangements in place, a PE in training can take responsibility for a student social worker in a placement.

4. **What would be the consequences of not meeting the requirements the PEPS within the timescales?**

A social work programme which does not meet the requirements of the PEPS by October 2013 will not be eligible for endorsement by The College. The College of Social Work endorsement scheme for qualifying courses will complement the regulatory function of accreditation carried out by the Health Professions Council (HPC). The endorsement criteria are designed to ensure the application of the new curriculum framework including practice education; this will help to ensure that graduates are safe to practise.

5. **Are the PEPS enforceable?**

Endorsement is the only way in which the Social Work Reform Board recommendations for improving the quality of social work education will be monitored consistently and nationally. Within the endorsement criteria, social work programmes will be expected to demonstrate how they develop and monitor the learning and development of PEs in relation to these standards. The HPC approval process expects...
courses to reflect the requirements of their professional bodies. The easiest way of demonstrating this will be via The College scheme.

6. What is the status of social workers undertaking a development pathway to Stage 1 or Stage 2?

All PEs in training should be supported by a Stage 2 practice educator/mentor. With these arrangements in place a PE in training can take responsibility for a student social worker in a placement.

7. How do existing qualifications/courses held by PEs (who are registered social workers) convert into Stage 1 and Stage 2 recognition under the new arrangements?

Existing PEs will have undertaken a wide range of training and development programmes as illustrated below. These will include the GSCC Practice Teacher Award, the Higher Specialist Award in practice education, PQ 6 or Enabling Others modules or pathways in the existing or previous PQ framework. PEs may also have undertaken 2 – 5 day in-house or HEI based programmes which may or may not have been formally assessed and/or academically accredited.

a. Existing qualifications that have equivalence (with conditions)

The only existing qualifications accepted as having reached the standards for Stage 2 are the Practice Teacher Award and the Higher Specialist Award in practice education within the GSCC PQ framework which also meet the PEPS (including observation of practice assessment requirements). PTA holders can be responsible for assessing and teaching students at all placement levels and may be able to act as mentors and assessors for PE candidates provided that partnerships¹ are satisfied:

- that the PTA holder has continued to regularly practise as a practice educator (normally has had direct responsibility for at least one student in the last two years or
- had relevant experience in practice education e.g. coordinating or managing practice learning or teaching/assessing on a practice educator programme or acting as a placement tutor

- and has retained and developed their skills, knowledge and value base (see section 11 below).

b. Enabling Others

PEs who have successfully completed an Enabling Others module or pathway within the PQ framework will not automatically meet Stage 1. Partnerships will be expected to

¹ Partnerships will include employers, HEIs and service users and carers.
make a decision as to whether they have evidenced all the learning outcomes specified for Stage 1 and have met the assessment requirements, specifically in relation to direct observation of practice.

c. Other PE training and qualifications (e.g. 2 – 5 day programmes)

In order to assess whether existing PEs meet the PEPS, partnerships should consider whether the learning and assessment programme undertaken enabled the PE to evidence both the learning outcomes and requirements (specifically in relation to direct observation) within the PEPS.

Partnerships may wish to develop a ‘top up’ pathway to enable existing PEs to meet learning outcomes or requirements not previously evidenced.

An alternative approach to mapping existing programmes against the PEPS, is for partnerships to develop an assessment process to enable individual PEs (who may possibly have had minimal initial training but have continued to practice and develop as PEs) to present evidence that they are meeting the standards.

All PEs at Stage 1 and Stage 2 must have been directly observed teaching, supervising and assessing a social work student as part of the assessment process (see PEPS for further details regarding eligible learners for observation and the number of direct observations required).

8. What are the requirements for on-site supervisors, especially in settings where there may not be a registered social worker on site?

On site practice supervisors may not have reached Stage 1 proficiency to support and supervise the day-to-day work of a social work student and may not be registered social workers. It is recommended that they should be working towards the Stage 1 learning outcomes (excluding A5 and C11) and be supported by their line manager and a Stage 2 practice educator. It is for the line manager to ensure that a practice supervisor is competent to provide day-to-day practice supervision of social work students.

If the practice supervisor is not a registered social worker then the practice educator (on or off site) must be a registered social worker, at Stage 2. This is required to ensure that all social work students are assessed by a registered social worker from October 2013. All placements need to adhere to the social work profession’s practice learning requirements.

9. What are the requirements for off-site PEs?
Both independent and employed off-site PEs are expected to have demonstrated proficiency at Stage 2 from October 2013, so therefore must be registered social workers. This applies to any PE employed by an agency but not a member of the same team or on the same site.

It is the responsibility of the agency or HEI contracting any independent PEs to be satisfied that the independent PE is competent and suitable to carry out their responsibilities, and has sufficient time to undertake their role effectively. This would include ensuring that appropriate CRB checks have been undertaken.

10. What is the role of The College in the training and recognition of PEs?
Demonstration that PEs meet the appropriate standards forms part of the endorsement criteria for The College.

11. What are the requirements for PEs in maintaining currency and CPD?

a. Will the 2 year currency that applies to existing PTA holders be applied to all PEs in future?
The College recommends that to maintain currency, all PEs should take full responsibility for a social work student at least every two years; this is in line with HPC’s re-registration requirements. It is also recommended that PEs record their role as a practice educator within their ‘scope of practice’ as defined by the HPC. Continuing professional development (CPD) records need to reflect the registrants ‘scope of practice’. Therefore practice educators should ensure that CPD relevant to their role as a PE is included specifically in CPD documentation and can be presented as evidence for re-registration (if requested by the regulator).

b. If your experience as PE is not up to date, what do you need to do to become a PE again?
Partnerships of employers and HEIs need to be satisfied that the PE is capable of meeting the standards. One way of ensuring this would be for the partnership to recommend a refresher course and/or provide support and mentoring whilst the PE takes responsibility for the first social work student placement when they return to the practice educator role. The partnership may require the mentor (a Stage 2 PE) to produce a report stating whether the PE continues to meet the standards.

2 Your ‘scope of practice’ is the area (or areas) of your profession in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not present any risk to the public or to yourself. Health Professions Council (2011), Continuing professional development and your registration http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10001314CPD_and_your_registration.pdf
c. **Is the only way to remain current to take a social work student?**
   PEs should normally take students at least every two years but the final decision rests with partnerships of HEIs and employers taking into account The College’s recommendation.

12. **Assessment questions and issues**

   a. **Who will ensure that all PEs are at the same level if there are a range of assessment models including those for non accredited pathways?**
   Partnerships will wish to develop mechanisms which ensure that all their PEs are meeting the standards. This will form part of The College’s endorsement criteria.

   The final assessment decision will be made jointly by the HEI and employer representatives ensuring that:

   - The employer representative is a Stage 2 PE working towards or meeting the professional educator capabilities within the Professional Capabilities Framework;
   - The HEI representative has delegated responsibility for practice learning provision;
   - Normally, it would not be deemed appropriate for the student’s tutor to be involved in the final assessment decision’.

   b. **What is the minimum involvement an HEI must have with an in house route, if any?**
   It is for HEIs and employers to develop suitable ways of enabling candidates to meet the learning outcomes, ranging from self-managed portfolio presentations to a variety of in-house, distance and open learning or HEI-based training pathways.

13. **What is the role of local partnerships in the training and recognition of PEs?**
   This is an extract from practice learning guidance which is currently being developed, to illustrate how outcomes for partnerships could be presented, to give more clarity about the activities expected from partnerships.

   **Can you show that:**
   - You have audited the qualifications of existing practice educators and have a plan to ensure a sufficient supply of Stage 1 and Stage 2 PEs by 2015, taking into account transitional arrangements for non-RSWs

   **Have you:**
   - Identified gaps in existing PEs with respect to the PEPS and planned an appropriate range of ‘top-up’ learning opportunities or programmes
• Planned and commissioned Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 programmes for new PEs
• Set up assessment processes for determining whether PEs can meet or can continue to meet PEPS
• Developed range of CPD opportunities for existing PEs
• Considered models of delivering practice placements that maximise the use of PEs able to meet PEPS e.g. use of off-site Stage 2 PEs or student unit arrangements
• Communicated how the PEPS will be met – to employers and HEIs, including senior managers, and to all practitioners wanting to contribute to the training of students, teams, team/service managers, existing PEs, those interested in becoming PEs