

It Really Made me Question and Pause to Think

Supporting Staff to Support Students as Advisors of Studies

A Programme of Staff Development Sessions



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AIM

To provide responsive Staff Development sessions for the Advisor of Studies Role in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Dundee

BACKGROUND

The School of Health Sciences recognises that Advisers of Studies (AoS) play a key role in supporting nursing students to stay on course whilst setting and maintaining standards for professional and academic behaviour (Eather et al, 2022; Tippetts et al, 2022). Emergent issues and the complexity of student needs suggest provision of proactive, targeted staff development sessions would support staff to respond quickly to student issues and cut out some of the time and workload impact of the role.

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

This innovation was implemented using the Plan, Do, Study, Act model (PDSA) (Taylor et al, 2014).

Plan

The Senior Adviser of Studies and the three Year Leads for the BSc Nursing met to discuss the content, mode of provision and approach, and identify leads for each session.

A mix of sessions in person, on both campuses, and online was offered

Do

Table 1: Session Content

Topic
Session 1: Being part of the student journey: Managing Expectations and Setting boundaries
Session 2: The role of the AoS /the difference between the AA and AoS role?
Building effective relationships
Session 3: Good practice – using policies effectively; Documentation of Student Contact; Keeping track of students with ongoing issues
Session 4: The NMC from a non-registrant perspective / using The Code to support discussions
Session 5: Sexual assault /GBV / supporting students / safeguarding adults and children
Session 6: Complex students; Professional issues (LiP).
Session 7: AoS Wellbeing session
Session 8: Racism / anti racist practice and supporting students
Session 9: Disability – reasonable adjustments and supporting students
Session 10: Managing difficult conversations
Session 11: AoS wellbeing session

Study

Each session was shared with an evaluation form link (MS Forms)

Table 2: Evaluation Questions

Question	Type/Detail
1.Please indicate your position and experience of the AoS role	CHOICE
2. Please share what you consider to be the most valuable part of the session?	OPEN TEXT
3. What could we have done differently?	OPEN TEXT
4. To what extent has this session added to your confidence in being an AoS	LIKERT 1 star (not very much) to 5 star (Hugely)
5. Do you have any other feedback for us? If so, please share your thoughts below	OPEN TEXT

FINDINGS

The majority of participants were new AoS or had up to 1 year's experience.

A minority were experienced more than 3 years.

One was an experienced AoS returning to the role after a break.

Responses to question 4 were all in the range of 4 or 5 stars, with the majority in 5 stars. This showed that the sessions contributed positively to AoS confidence in their role.

Table 3: Thematic Findings

Theme	Notes
Shared Experiences	The value of experienced members of staff, and the solidarity of other staff with similar information and support needs.
Empowerment	An overall sense of knowledge and understanding contributing to staff feeling empowered in their AoS role. Sessions helped to build confidence.
Thought-provoking	Participants found many of the sessions thought provoking and enabled a realistic but informal exploration of aspects of AoS role and student support needs.
Practical knowledge	Knowing what practical steps to take in certain situations; useful models and tools for core aspects of the AoS role (eg managing difficult conversations) Lots of factual information and signposting to resources of benefit
Mode of Delivery	Interactivity was a strength Use of case studies was very valued A safe space to discuss difficult issues Facilitators were very effective, creating an open and honest culture, a safe space.
Recommendations	Sessions to be organised centrally so they appear in staff calendars. Consider running all sessions on both campuses More practice sessions using case studies to explore how AoS would respond in different situations, covering a wider range of topics Sessions should be part of staff induction and available as all-staff training throughout the academic year.

Act

Based on the evaluation, the next steps or actions should be to:

- Set up a suite of sessions (see Table 4) as part of induction/all-staff training, organised centrally, that staff can opt into
- Locate these sessions on both campuses
- Add these sessions to new staff induction
- Review and update session content
- Evaluate sessions and report back/review

Table 4: Revised/planned sessions

The role of the AoS, (including longitudinal onboarding), and the role of the Student Support Team	Managing Difficult Conversations
Gender awareness and gender-based violence	Racism and anti-racist practice.
Disability and Reasonable Adjustments	Safeguarding
Documentation of Student Contact and Keeping track of students with ongoing issues, including Using the Health and Ability Passport.	Professionalism, fitness to practice and fitness to study (including policies and procedures)
Being part of the student journey: Managing Expectations and Setting and maintaining boundaries	Supporting students with complex needs and supporting student diversity.
Support for AoS – making best use of the AoS Forum and AoS Drop ins	The SHS Inclusive Education Toolkit

Eather, N., Mavilidi, M. F., Sharp, H., & Parkes, R. (2022). Programmes targeting student retention/success and satisfaction/experience in higher education: A systematic review. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 44(3), 223-239.

Taylor, M. J., McNicholas, C., Nicolay, C., Darzi, A., Bell, D., & Reed, J. E. (2014). Systematic review of the application of the plan-do-study-act method to improve quality in healthcare. *BMJ quality & safety*, 23(4), 290-298.

*Tippetts, M. M., Brandley, A. T., Metro, J., King, M., Ogren, C., & Zick, C. D. (2022). Promoting persistence: The role of academic advisors. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 24(2), 526-547.

References