



**Supporting Effective
Practice Learning**

Unit 3

**Creating a Positive
Learning Environment**

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Introduction

This unit is for practitioners preparing to be a practice supervisor and/or practice assessor and will explore some of the aspects that contribute to a positive learning environment.

The learning should take approximately 5 hours to complete. You may find it useful to undertake unit 2 titled: **Learning Theory** prior to completing this unit.

A positive learning environment facilitates students to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required of healthcare professionals.

Aim

The aim of this unit is to develop your knowledge and skills to support the creation of an environment for learning that is safe, effective and empowers students to reach their full potential.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- + Evaluate the learning environment, using evidence-based tools based on the Quality Standards to Support Practice Placement.
- + Identify and evaluate factors which promote a positive learning environment.
- + Discuss the wide variety of options available to support teaching and learning in practice.
- + Discuss how we ensure equality and diversity for students within the practice placement environment.

TOPIC 1

Creating an environment for learning

Professional and Regulatory Standards and Frameworks

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) are the professional regulatory body for Nursing and Midwifery in the UK, they work to ensure that nurses and midwives have the knowledge and skills to deliver consistent, quality care that is safe and effective. Watch [this clip](#) to get an overview of their role.

As you will have read in the introduction to these learning units, the NMC have developed:

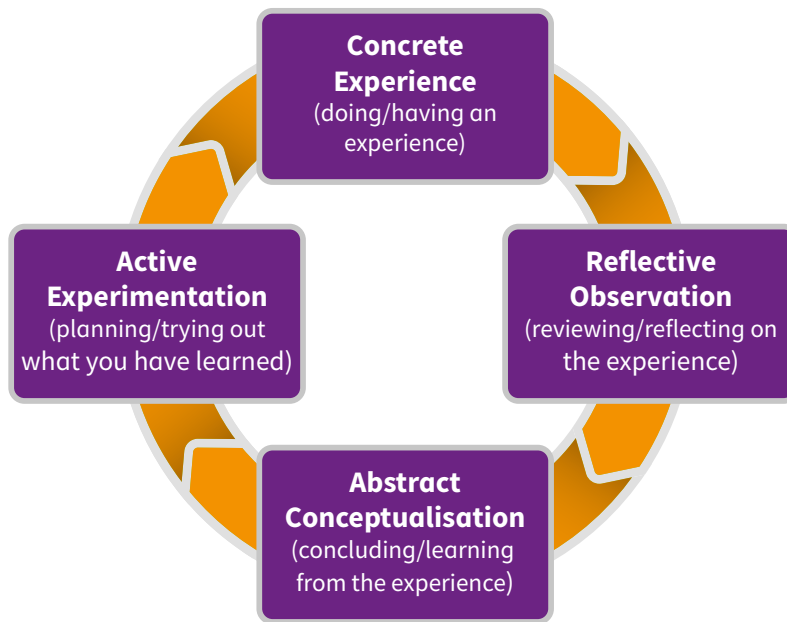
- ⊕ Standards of proficiency for registered nurses.
- ⊕ Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education.
- ⊕ Standards for student supervision and assessment.
- ⊕ Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes
- ⊕ Standards of proficiency for midwives
- ⊕ Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes
- ⊕ Standards related to return to practice
- ⊕ Standards for prescribers.

As part of your preparation for supporting pre and post registration learners in practice, it is important that you read these standards. Pre-registration education in particular is constantly evolving, and the curriculum is dynamic in order to prepare nurses and midwives for the new roles they will be undertaking within the evolving health and social care environment.



Activity

Once you have read the standards for pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes take some time to reflect on the changes to the curriculum since you were a student nurse or midwife, and consider how you can support students in your area to achieve the learning outcomes outlined in the new standards. Use Kolb's (1984) learning cycle to ensure you reflect fully and plan how you can effectively support students in practice



Activity

The Code (NMC 2018a) outlines the professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates, when was the last time you read it?

Take some time to do so now. [The Code NMC \(2018a\)](#)

Quality Standards for Practice Placements

Practice learning environments (PLE) within nursing and midwifery allow learners to transfer their theory into practice, the Royal College of Nurses (RCN) state that high quality practice-based education facilitates students to “apply knowledge to practice, learn key skills and achieve the required competencies for registration” (RCN 2017)

“Quality practice placement experiences, within a positive learning environment, support the development of healthcare professionals to deliver safe and effective person-centred care” (NES 2008)

PLEs are diverse, they may be hospital or community based, primary, secondary or tertiary care, they may be staffed by a single person, or have large teams.

An educational audit is completed in partnership with the Higher Education Institute in order to decide whether a learning environment is suitable for pre and post registration student nurses and midwives.

The NMC (2018b) expects that PLE's are safe and effective and provides guidance for approved Higher education institutes (HEIs) and their practice partners to adhere to within the new standards. They also provide supporting information to support organisations when developing and maintaining PLE's, these are available [here on the NMC website](#).

It is a key priority for NHS Education for Scotland (NES) practice education staff to 'extend the breadth of practice learning experiences into contemporary health and care environments' (NES 2019a) and they are invested through their [practice education network](#) in exploring new practice learning environments in order to maximise the opportunities available to student nurses.

Once an area has been identified as a suitable PLE an educational audit is undertaken, to provide assurance of the quality of the practice environment before students are allocated. This process is repeated on a regular basis (annually or bi-annually - check with your partner HEIs) to ensure the placement remains a suitable environment for learning.

Educational Audits are a tripartite process, undertaken by the following representatives:

- ⊕ Practice area (usually the Senior Charge Nurse (SCN)/ Team Leader (TL)/ Manager for the area or their deputy).
- ⊕ Health board practice education team.
- ⊕ Higher Education Institute (HEI).

Audits are undertaken using the Quality Management of the Practice Learning Environment (QMPL) database (more about that later in the unit) and start with the Senior Charge Nurse providing evidence of how the placement area meets the Quality Standards for Practice Placement (QSPP) NES (2008). This document was developed so that everyone involved with practice learning knows what their responsibilities are in relation to practice placement learning. Please note the QSPP is currently being updated.

The second part of the process is a tripartite meeting, where the evidence supporting the QSPP and any student feedback from the previous audit period is discussed and the number of allocated students agreed. Having reviewed the information and agreed that the evidence provided supports that the area offers a positive supportive learning environment where students are able to meet the learning outcomes for their programme, the audit is approved and signed off.



Activity

Please read through the QSPP document and consider your own learning environment, undertake this exercise and provide evidence of how your learning environment supports section 1 and 2 of the QSPP. You can access the document [here](#).

Record your thoughts

Are there any areas that your workplace can improve on?

Please create an action plan to address this

Quality Management of the Practice Learning Environment: QMPLE

QMPLE is a national online database developed by NES which manages all the data related to the quality of the practice learning environment; for example, student feedback, educational audits and practice assessor information. It provides evidence of the quality of learning, supervision and assessment through six Excellence in Care measures for placement areas.

Implementing and embedding QMPLE was a key aspect of the **Future Nurse and Midwife Project Board workplan**. Providing quality data to improve professional practice which in turn should have a positive impact on the supervision and assessment of student nurses and midwives, our future workforce. Developing a culture of learning from feedback is important as it helps enhance and improve the learning environment.

Practice education teams across all boards worked in collaboration with NES and their partner HEIs to implement the national QMPLE database in practice.



Activity

Ask the SCN to show you the QMPLE database for your area, also ask a student to let you see their QMPLE view and review the following:

- + the learning environment placement profile,
- + “You said, we did” box for student feedback,
- + local welcome pack,
- + student pre-placement information.

Is the information up to date and current, does anything need changed or altered, what can you do to support this work? Have a discussion with the SCN/TL for your area and record any actions.

TOPIC 2

Factors which influence a positive learning environment



Activity

Create a mind map of all of the factors that you can think of that influence the creation of a positive learning environment. If you are new to the idea of mind maps, have a look at [this resource](#).

Compare your mind map to ours – what are differences, what are the similarities? Let’s explore some of these factors in more detail in the following sections.



Establishing Effective Working Relationships

A key component of our mind map was people. We know that students will require a Practice Supervisor (PS) and Practice Assessor (PA) in the practice learning environment. What will these roles entail?

You should have covered this information in Unit 1, however here is a quick review.

The National Framework for Practice Supervisors, Practice Assessors and Academic Assessors in Scotland (NES 2019b) gives us the following guidance.

Practice Supervisor

What they do:

- ⊕ Act as a role model.
- ⊕ Support and supervise.
- ⊕ Provide feedback.
- ⊕ Record observations.
- ⊕ Contribute to assessments.
- ⊕ Raise and respond to student conduct and competence concerns.
- ⊕ Engage with the practice assessor and academic assessor, where required.

Practice Supervisor

What they need to know:

- ⊕ Current knowledge and experience.
- ⊕ Understanding of student proficiencies, programme outcomes and practice assessment document.
- ⊕ Effective supervision, student learning and assessment methods.

Practice Assessor

What they do:

- + Seek feedback from practice supervisors.
- + Periodically observe students.
- + Draw on evidence from other sources.
- + Communicate and collaborate with the nominated academic assessor.
- + Make and record objective, evidence-based assessments on student conduct, proficiency and achievement.

Practice Assessor

What they need to know:

- + Current knowledge and experience for programme they are assessing.
- + Understanding of student proficiencies, programme outcomes and assessment document.
- + Skills relevant to student learning and assessment.
- + Conducting objective evidence-based assessments.
- + Providing feedback.

Role modelling is an important aspect for both practice supervisor or practice assessor: leading by example, making the student feel welcomed and valued, understanding the importance of lifelong learning, and having self-awareness and emotional intelligence (Felstead and Springett 2016).

Qualities of good role models include competence, confidence, commitment and lifelong learning this can include being mindful of role in shaping the future workforce, integrating theory and practice through:

- + Professionalism.
- + Student support.
- + Culture of learning.
- + A supportive clinical environment.

However, is that all that students want from PS/PAs? In reality the roles are more nuanced, Darling (1984) found fourteen 'ideal' skills and qualities of mentorship relevant for those supporting education in practice:

- + A **role model** – the student can value and admire and may wish to emulate.
- + A **visioner** who is enthusiastic about opportunities or possibilities and inspires interest.

- ⊕ An **energizer** who makes the profession fascinating and is enthusiastic and dynamic.
- ⊕ An **investor** who spends a lot of time with the learner, spots potential and capabilities and can hand over responsibility.
- ⊕ A **supporter** who is willing to listen, is warm and caring and is available in times of need.
- ⊕ A **standard pusher** who is very clear about what level of performance is required and prompts the learner to achieve it.
- ⊕ A **teacher-coach** who can instruct about setting priorities, help to develop interpersonal skills, give guidance on patient problems and encourage learning from experience.
- ⊕ A **feedback giver** who can offer both positive and negative feedback and help the student examine the things that go wrong.
- ⊕ An **eye opener** who inspires interest in research and is able to facilitate understanding of the wider issues such as policies and guidelines.
- ⊕ A **door opener** who includes the student in discussions and offer the student opportunities to be involved in new areas of practice.
- ⊕ An **idea bouncer** who not only discusses issues, problems and goals, but also allows the learner to present and argue ideas.
- ⊕ A **problem solver** who helps the student to figure out and try out new ideas.
- ⊕ A **career counsellor** who gives guidance and support in career planning.
- ⊕ A **challenger** who questions opinions and beliefs and forces the student to examine decisions.



Activity

Undertake a self- assessment and see where you may need to develop using the template below?

Also consider your team, we can't all be good at everything, look at each other's strengths and weaknesses, direct students accordingly and support each other to develop.

Characteristic	This is a strength	I can offer this	I am not particularly good at this	I don't want to do this
Role Model				
Visioner				
Energiser				
Investor				
Supporter				
Standard-pusher				
Teacher-coach				
Feedback giver				
Eye opener				
Door opener				
Idea bouncer				
Problem solver				
Career counsellor				
Challenger				



Activity

Consider someone from your nursing or midwifery career that was inspiring, that supported your learning, who empowered you to be the best nurse you could be, which of the above qualities did they have?

Record your answers

People are at the heart of all that we do, but they also have a vast array of pressures; both at work and sometimes at home, which can have an impact on how they behave.

Read the following article on how incivility can impact the learning environment. You can access this via the Knowledge Network using your Athens password.

Eka N, Chambers D (2019) Incivility in Nurse education: A systematic literature review. *Nurse Education in Practice*. 39, 45 – 54.

There are lots of resources available to support your continuing professional development, have a discussion with your local practice education team for some support and guidance around this.



Activity

Consider what actions the student could have taken following this episode?

Some of your answers should be:

- + Contact the Practice Education Facilitator for the area
- + Contact the Link lecturer/practice education lecturer for the area
- + Speak to the team leader/senior charge nurse for the area to report concerns
- + Speak to the mentor directly

Now watch this NHS TED talk <https://youtu.be/VN9VwX2rUqk>

Does this change your thinking in any way?

In summary, as a PS/PA you can be a role model, visionary, and inspirational leader. However, simply being open, welcoming and friendly can put the student at ease and allow them to relax, be themselves and perform to the best of their ability. Simply referring to the student by name, rather than calling them “the student” for 10 weeks can make a world of difference.

Preparedness

Student responsibilities

Students need to take the time to prepare for placement. They will have preparation for practice sessions delivered within the HEI which will inform them of the actions they should undertake prior to starting a new practice placement, they should:

- ⊕ Log in to QMPLE and review the pre-placement information provided.
- ⊕ Undertake the pre-placement activities outlined in their practice assessment documentation as per [COVID-19](#) measures.
- ⊕ Contact the placement area and get their shifts for the first few days of placement.
- ⊕ Reflect on their previous placements and consider their learning needs during this placement.

PS/PA Responsibilities

It is expected that as a PS and/or a PA you will be suitably prepared to undertake the role (NMC 2018b). The roles have already been discussed in more detail in Unit 1. If you are still unsure about what either role entails, please undertake the introductory unit again.

In Scotland, students will be allocated a nominated practice supervisor for each practice placement, their role is to “actively support students and address student concerns” they are also expected to ensure there is “co-ordination and continuity of support and supervision” (NMC 2018b).

Before the student starts their placements

Learning environments will prepare for students starting placement by:

- ⊕ Allocating a nominated PS.
- ⊕ Allocating a PA.
- ⊕ Reviewing the learning opportunities available for the relevant stage of student.
- ⊕ Considering how the student will be supervised in practice.

When the student arrives for placement, time should be taken for full orientation to the area and a preliminary meeting should take place within 48 hours of commencing placement.

During this meeting, the following should be discussed and formulated in partnership with the student:

- ⊕ The previous skills practised, in order to identify current learning needs.
- ⊕ The level at which the proficiencies/practice learning outcomes have to be achieved during this PLE.
- ⊕ The available learning opportunities within this PLE.
- ⊕ Any additional student support requirements taking cognisance of reasonable adjustment.
- ⊕ An initial Learning Development Plan for Learning.

It is important to develop the learning and development plan in partnership with the student; we need to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning, guiding them with regard to what they can achieve within a particular specialty.

We need to ensure that learning objectives that we set are SMART:

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely.

If for example the student is an adult community nursing placement, it is unrealistic to have a learning objective that relates to caring for a patient within a theatre setting.

Participation in Care Framework

The expected level of performance for Part 1 is Dependent. This means that students will be working closely with practice supervisors who will direct and guide. Through guided participation in care, students will be able to demonstrate delivery of safe, effective person-centred care in a professional manner using appropriate nursing skills.

The expected level of performance for Part 2 is Developing Independence. This means that students will be developing independence and practice supervisors will offer guidance and support when required. Students will actively participate in care with this guidance and will demonstrate increasing confidence and competence.

The expected level of performance for Part 3 is Independent. Students will be working independently, and practice supervisors will offer a more indirect form of supervision. Students will demonstrate the ability to lead and coordinate care, and the ability to act as an accountable practitioner, demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge base that informs safe and effective practice (Scottish National Practice Assessment Document 2020)

This process is essentially creating a contract of learning with the student, it sets the expectations for the placement, if at any time the student falls below the expected standards set out at the beginning of placement, the PS or PA can have a conversation with the student and refer back to the preliminary discussion. The learning and development plan should be regularly reviewed and adjusted as required.



Activity

Read the article: [Nurses as Educators: creating teachable moments in practice.](#)

Consider what could be opportunistic teachable moments and proactive teachable moments within your learning environment.

What actions do you need to take to ensure that these happen in practice?

Opportunistic T-moments	How will I achieve these

Supervision

Students will require a varying degrees of supervision dependant on their stage of the programme. The decision regarding supervision level, should be based on the observed individual student competence and can vary depending on the student’s previous experience and complexity of care being provided in the clinical setting (NES 2019b). The level of supervision can decrease with the student’s increasing proficiency and confidence (NMC 2018).

NES (2019b) have provided a model for the supervision of practice, (adapted from Kilminster et al (2007) which is helpful for practice learning staff to consider when trying to decide the most appropriate level of supervision for students. Please see table below.

Kilminster et al model	Adapted for nursing and midwifery practice
To be represented in the same room as person being supervised.	Practicing / working alongside and in the same room as the student being supervised, for example, in the same inpatient room, bay or in the patient’s home.
To be nearby and immediately available to come to the aid of the person being supervised.	Practicing / working closely in the same ward / department / patient’s home and immediately available to support the student being supervised.
To be in the hospital or primary care premises and available at short notice, able to offer immediate help by telephone and able to come to the aid of the person within a short time.	Practicing / working in the same hospital, community setting or care home and able to offer the student immediate support or guidance by telephone and face to face guidance within a short period of time.
To be on call and available for advice, able to come to the trainee’s assistance in an appropriate length of time.	Practicing / working at a distance from the student and available for advice and guidance (via telephone or digital technology) and able to come to the student’s assistance in an appropriate length of time.

Coaching

A coaching model can help to motivate, encourage and facilitate students throughout the learning process, empowering students to take responsibility for their learning. The new standards have moved away from a mentorship approach with students taking a more proactive role in their learning (NMC 2018). The coaching model supports this aspect of the standards as the practice supervisor can use a coaching strategy to allow the learner to identify solutions to practice-based problems in a safe environment.

Watch this short animated clip to learn some more about coaching - [Coaching in Practice Supervision](#)

There are different coaching models available, let's have a look at some of these:

+ Collaborative Learning in Practice (CLiP) Model

This model has been successfully piloted in Newcastle hospitals more information can be found here <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/practice-based-learning/innovations-from-around-the-uk/using-a-coaching-model-in-practice-supervision>.

Watch this video to see how this works with a student in practice - [practice supervision utilising a coaching model](#).

How does this differ to how you have supported students in the past?
Do you think it is an effective model for learning in practice?

Please record your thoughts.

If you are interested in exploring coaching models further, take some time to look at the following models:

+ **GROW Model** – this model is attributed to John Whitmore (1992) and identifies a 4-stage process. For each stage the coach will ask several questions.

G: Goals - goals and aspirations

R: Reality - current situation, internal and external obstacles

O: Options - possibilities, strengths and resources

W: Will - actions and accountability

More information can be found [here](#)

- ➕ **The OSCAR model** has been utilised by Northampton General Hospital Trust with success, you can read more about it in this [article](#).

OSCAR

O: outcome - what would you like to achieve?

S: situation - what is currently happening?

C: choices and consequences - what can you do and what could happen?

A: action - how will you do it who will support?

R: review - when will we evaluate progress?

Coaching may be a new approach and will take some time to implement, have a discussion with your local practice education team to see if a coaching model is being utilised in your area.

TOPIC 3

Supporting Equality and Diversity

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are when reasonable steps are taken to ensure a learner is not at a substantial disadvantage due to disability. Learner's must be provided with adjustments in accordance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation in all learning environments and for supervision and assessment (NMC 2018b). It is worth noting that it is the student's decision and responsibility if they wish to disclose, they have a learning or physical difficulty. A student can choose not to disclose for a variety of reasons, including concern around the stigma related to their difficulty.

To ensure an effective learning environment, learning experiences should be inclusive and support the diverse needs of individual learners (NMC 2018). There is legislative guidance on this available [here](#).

For example, in a practice learning environment where a learner with dyslexia is on practice placement, reasonable adjustments may include the following:

- + Coloured overlays.
- + Allowing extra time.
- + Additional training if required.
- + Provision of written examples of documentation.
- + Giving a quiet area to complete documentation.

PS/PAs should facilitate a discussion regarding the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments in practice. These should be documented in the learner's PAD.

Sometimes students can fail to meet the level of competence required in practice due to their disability, despite having reasonable adjustments in place, for example:

- + erratic spelling
- + misreading
- + poor handwriting
- + poor memory retention
- + difficulty in organising work
- + poor time management
- + short concentration span
- + confusion between right and left
- + inconsistency in clinical performance
- + not responding appropriately to constructive feedback
- + appearing unable to make changes in response to constructive criticism
- + has limited interactions or poor communication skills
- + experience continual poor health
- + angry, uncommitted, withdrawn
- + emotionally unstable

If concerns around competence arise, the Practice Education Facilitator (PEF) for the area should be informed and further discussion should take place with the learner, PS, PA and AA.

If you require support with reasonable adjustment in your practice learning environment, possible contacts are:

- + University Student Disability Service
- + PEF/CHEF team



Activity

Familiarise yourself with local policies and procedures for your HEI.

Find out who you can contact in your local area to support you and students regarding reasonable adjustments

Please record your thoughts.

Some additional helpful resources on Reasonable Adjustments:

- + RCN Guidance for Mentors of Nursing and Midwifery Students. Available at <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-006133>
- + Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment. Available at <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/education-standards/student-supervision-assessment.pdf>
- + Guidance on reasonable adjustments. Available at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-are-reasonable-adjustments>

End of unit summary and assessment guidance

Now that you have completed Unit 3, you will have developed a better understanding of the multi-faceted aspects involved in creating a positive learning environment.

Development of a positive learning environment can be a complex tripartite process assuring the quality of the practice learning environment, but equally it can be as simple as being welcoming to your students. Using their name and being prepared for their placement.

Unit 3

Summary of learning

Now you have completed Unit 3, the following is a summary of the information you will have learned.

‘The Code’ gives guidance on how to create a positive learning environment

QSPP stands for **Quality Standards for Practice Placement**

The Higher Education Institute and NHS Board area assure that areas are suitable for practice placement by carrying out an **Educational Audit**

QMPLE can be used for:

- + Student pre-placement information
- + Gathering student feedback

Before attending placement a student should:

- + Log in to QMPLE and review the pre-placement information provided
- + Undertake the pre-placement activities outlined in their practice assessment documentation
- + Contact the placement area and get their shifts for the first few days of placement
- + Reflect on their previous placements and consider their learning needs during this placement

Before the student attends placement, the placement area should:

- + Allocate a nominated practice supervisor
- + Review the learning opportunities available for the relevant stage of student
- + Consider how the student will be supervised in practice

The **level of supervision** your student requires **should be based on the observed individual student competence**

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ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or e-mail: **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.



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