

10 September 2020

Statement on student supervision

Executive Summary

In July 2020, Ruth Allerton got in touch with HCPC to discuss Health Education England (HEE)'s AHP Placement Capacity Expansion Project. This seeks to increase the capacity of AHP placements in England, of which key is finding more supervisors for students to support this increase. Ruth is also engaging with employers and professional bodies.

As part of this project, Ruth wanted to understand the HCPC's expectations in this area. Having initially spoken to Brendon Edmonds about this, this work was passed on to the Policy team.

Summary of discussion

In our call, Ruth explained that for many registrants supervision of students is seen as a voluntary activity. Registrants are therefore asked if they want a student, rather than expected to supervise them.

Ruth wanted to strengthen this expectation, so registrants are expected to supervise students unless that would not be appropriate (for example as they are a lone worker or in a non-clinical role). She wanted to know if there was anything we could change as part of our regulatory processes or within our standards that would strengthen this expectation.

In the initial call, Ruth asked if this is something we could include in CPD audits. We discussed how HCPC does not specify the type of CPD a registrant must include in an audit. We also discussed how this would be challenging given many registrants may not be in a position where supervision is possible (e.g. as they work independently or are in management or non-clinical roles).

Instead, we discussed the expectations in the standards, set out in the more detail in the attached statement. In summary, there are broad expectations that education providers will ensure students are supervised as part of their practice placements. However, the professional standards don't require registrants to offer supervision to students. However, whilst not compulsory, we are very supportive of supervision and recognise the value it has for our registrants. We also expect registrants to support colleagues (including students) working with them and offer appropriate supervision and support if they delegate work to them.

We also noted that our guidance and standards do not prevent professional bodies or employers from setting their own local requirements. For example, an employer might

want to make it a requirement of registrants' job descriptions that they supervise students. If so, we would expect registrants to meet this.

Following our call, Ruth accepted that we cannot make supervision mandatory. However, she wanted us to help change the narrative and make registrants see supervision as part of their professional identity and given them a sense of responsibility for the next generation of their profession.

Statement request

Ruth has asked that HCPC provide a statement of support about student supervision. This would go in the AHP Learning Placement Exchange. More detail can be found on the HEE website: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/allied-health-professions/helping-ensure-essential-supply-ahps/placement-expansion-innovation>.

This is part of the Future NHS site (<https://future.nhs.uk/>), and will house placement case studies, various documents relations to placement and a discussion forum.

HEE hope the site will be accessed by anyone interested in placement whether though looking for ideas or sharing them. Ruth hopes that a short piece which explains the HCPC thinking that contributing to placement/education is part of being an AHP professional and encourages people to think in this way would be really positive.

Attached to this paper is a draft statement. It has been developed jointly by Education and Policy colleagues in light of our current position in the standards.

Future guidance on supervision

Whilst our standards do not mandate supervision, we are very supportive of it and the value it brings registrants. It has frequently come up in our research and it is clear when a registrant has access to good, effective supervision this can help prevent things going wrong in their practice. It therefore supports our wider prevention work to strengthen our position in the future.

We also frequently get enquiries from registrants and education providers about this. This has also come up in the Standards of proficiency consultation responses. There is therefore a clear desire to strengthen this expectation to support education providers.

This however has to be proportionate. We recognise that what is appropriate supervision will depend on a particular registrant's role, scope of practice and work setting. It therefore may not be appropriate for us to mandate this for registrants. Any future position set by us therefore has to take account of this, allowing employers and professional bodies flexibility for their particular professions whilst ensuring we are able to influence practice in a way that benefits patient safety.

In 2019, we published [independent research on effective clinical and peer supervision](#). Part of the Policy team's work plan for this year is to use the findings of this research to develop online guidance on supervision. This would make our expectations of supervision clearer, whilst still allowing for the flexibility mentioned above.

We have tried to capture this nuance in the statement and would welcome SMT's thoughts about this.

Previous consideration	This statement has been agreed by the SMT.
Decision	The Committee is asked to note the statement.
Next steps	The statement will be published.
Strategic priority	The strategic priorities set in 2018 are no longer current. We are developing a new strategy that we aim to confirm at the end of 2020.
Risk	<p>Strategic risk 1,2 & 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• failure to deliver effective regulatory functions;• failure to anticipate and respond to changes in the external environment; and• failure to be a trusted regulator and meet stakeholder expectations. <p>Risk appetite. The following sections are relevant to this paper:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public protection - The Council takes a minimal approach to public protection risks. Public protection is our aim and our strategy and processes are intended to provide this.• Compliance - The Council takes a minimal approach to compliance and regulatory risk. We will meet the law, regulations or standards in place to protect the public and employees and to protect data.• Communication - The Council is open to communicating and taking decisions, even when this may be unpopular, to further public protection.• Innovation - The Council seeks innovation that supports public protection, quality and efficiency. We balance embracing new technology and ideas with impact and financial investment and assess projects accordingly.
Financial and resource implications	None
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HCPC statement on student supervision

- 1.1 We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This statement sets out our broad expectations regarding registration participation in the supervision of students from HCPC approved programmes.
- 1.2 This covers both our expectations for education providers, providing student placement supervision, and expectations for registrants offering supervision to others (including students).

Standards for education and training

- 1.3 It is a requirement of the Standards for education and training that 'practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users' (Standards for education and training 5.4). In our Guidance on the Standards for education and training, we state that this might include the level of supervision or autonomy that learners have.
- 1.4 There must also be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning (Standards for education and training 5.5). This includes 'practice educators' who we define as a person who is responsible for a learner's education during their practice-based learning. They must 'have relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, must be on the relevant part of the Register' (Standards for education and training 5.6).
- 1.5 In our Guidance on the Standards for education and training, we recognise that there are different models of practice-based learning and the level of day to-day supervision or involvement of practice educators and other staff can vary among programmes. As a result, we do not say how many staff must be present at practice-based learning, how exactly they must be involved or what their qualification and experience levels must be. However, programmes must be able to justify what they consider to be a suitable number of staff for the number of learners and the level of support specific learners need.

Professional standards

- 1.6 The Standards of conduct, performance and ethics and the Standards of proficiency do not mandate that our registrants receive supervision or provide this to students. However, they do support the case that registrants should be doing so, where they have the appropriate skills:

You must work in partnership with colleagues, sharing your skills, knowledge and experience where appropriate, for the benefit of service users and carers. (Standard 2.5 of the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics)

- 1.7 Our definition of colleagues, set out in the glossary of the Standard of conduct performance and ethics, includes students.
- 1.8 They also set clear expectations that if someone delegates work to someone else then they need to provide 'appropriate supervision and support' (Standard of conduct performance and ethics 4.2).
- 1.9 As with any element of a registrant's practice, a registrant should only offer supervision if it is within their scope of practice. Standard 3.1 of the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics requires registrants to 'keep within their scope of practice by only practising in the areas they have appropriate knowledge, skills and experience for'. This would mean we would expect a registrant to be suitably qualified to perform a supervisor role and have the required knowledge, skills and experience in the area of practice they are supervising.
- 1.10 The Standards of proficiency also state that registrants must 'understand the importance of participation in training, supervision and mentoring' (Standards of proficiency 4.7). At the time of writing, these standards are subject to a public consultation and so our position on supervision might be strengthened in these standards in the future.

Further guidance

- 1.11 We agree there are significant benefits arising from supervision in the workplace, and promote this wherever possible. Last year we published a [blog post outlining the value of supervision](#) and we will soon be taking forward work to develop an online guidance on supervision following [independent research we commissioned](#).
- 1.12 We also recognise that what constitutes appropriate supervision will depend on a particular registrant's role, scope of practice and work setting. [Professional bodies](#) often also have detailed expectations in this area, which we defer to.
- 1.13 Finally, our standards are threshold standards and therefore do not preclude employers from outlining additional requirements for their employees. Therefore, an employer might want to make it a requirement of registrants' job descriptions that they supervise students. If so, we would expect registrants to be offered training and / or support to ensure this was part of their scope of practice.