

Practice Learning Guide (Northern Ireland) 2024

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Practice Learning Guide Northern Ireland 2023/24

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Introduction

This Practice Learning Guide is for everybody actively involved in practice learning – especially students, practice teachers, on-site supervisors, practice verifiers and practice tutors. Its aim is to provide a common and transparent approach to assessment and support throughout the practice learning period.

All students should read this introduction as it discusses important information about the professional standards and requirements for social work.

Part 1 contains guidance for the K113 practice learning, which leads to the 'preparation for practice' assessment.

Part 2 is the guidance for the K216 and K315 placements.

This handbook may also be of interest to K113 students who are hoping to proceed to the practice learning modules (K216 and K315). Please be aware that successful completion of K113 does not provide automatic entry to the social work degree. If you would like to progress to the degree, you will first need to secure formal sponsorship from a designated and approved social care employer and apply for nomination onto the programme. For further details regarding the admissions process, contact the social work team in Northern Ireland: Ireland-Social-Work@open.ac.uk. It is important to note that if you are studying K113 and you are not registered on the BA (Hons) Social Work Degree in NI, you are not a social work student and you are completing K113 independent to this degree. If you are unsure which qualification you are registered on, please contact the Student Support Team via StudentHome.

Students should use this guide alongside other module documents, including the Northern Ireland Social Work Degree Handbook (the 'Handbook'), the relevant Module Guide and Assessment Guide, Aids to Practice, law resources and study planner.

Please use Table 1 (along with the Contents page or Index) to locate specific information that may be relevant to your particular role.

Context of Practice Learning

Becoming a professional social worker requires more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Work-based practice learning is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work. In Northern Ireland, students completing a professional course in social work must complete two periods of work-based practice learning. Throughout the Degree in Social Work Programme students are required to complete 225 days of practice learning, of which:

- 25 days must be spent in preparation for direct work with service users
- 185 days must be spent in direct supervised practice (85 days at stage 2 and 100 days at stage 3) and 15 days must be used as Practice Development Days (PDDs) (NISCC, 2020).

Practice learning opportunities (PLO) are usually undertaken in a student's own agency (if deemed suitable) at Stage 2 (for K216). Stage 3 students move to another work setting (which may or may not be within the same organisation), and Stage 3 placements are allocated through a regional organisation, the **Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP)**.

A practice learning opportunity (PLO) refers to the period of time a student spends in a practice setting. The practice learning experience aims to provide students with the opportunities to develop understanding, knowledge, skills, values, ethics and professionalism in social work practice. In each PLO students are required to demonstrate

progress commensurate with the level of the programme. Each PLO will also provide opportunities to develop anti-oppressive practice.

As adult learners, students have a responsibility to use the PLO to maximise learning and to use the support provided to promote their personal and professional development. Appropriate staff in the PLO site will ensure that suitable learning opportunities are available to enable students to meet the requirements. These staff will also support students to achieve the level of confidence and competence required.

Each student is assigned a practice teacher who assesses their practice in terms of competent and confident practice at both Stage 2 and Stage 3. Practice teachers assess students' competence using the 6 Key Roles and 20 National Occupational Standards (NOS) for social work in which students must demonstrate competence and confidence as a qualifying social worker (The Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work 2015).

As well as demonstrating competence in the Key Roles and NOS, social work students must also demonstrate that they are able to adhere to the Social Care Standards of Conduct for Social Work Students (2019). Social work students are required to register with the **Northern Ireland Social Care Council (also known as the NISCC or Social Care Council (SCC))**. This is a regulatory body for the social care workforce. Its purpose is to raise standards in the workforce by registering social care workers and social workers; setting standards for their conduct and practice; and supporting their professional development.

Practice Learning Requirements

The Social Care Council requires all students to spend 185 days in direct supervised practice.

Over the course of the degree students should have opportunities to gain experience of:

- carrying out statutory social work tasks;
- at least two different settings;
- providing services to at least two service user groups;
- group care;
- working with at least two other professions;
- the contested nature, scope and purpose of social work in a diverse society;
- participating in formal decision – making forums;
- participating in and presenting evidence in courts or tribunals or other formal hearings; and
- applying community development approaches in social work.

(The Northern Ireland Social Care Council, 2018)

Table 1 Which sections apply to my role?

Section	Topic	Who should read this?
Introduction	Introduces the three stages of practice learning, explains how to use this Practice Learning Guide and summarises the professional requirements that students must achieve.	Everyone
Part 1	Practice Learning Guidance for K113	
1-6		K113 students and practice verifiers/ managers
Part 2	Practice Learning Guidance for K216/K315	
1	Outlines the requirements, roles and responsibilities of each member of the practice learning team. Also, specifies qualification requirements for practice teachers and on-site supervisors.	
2	Overview of placement requirements and The Open University's expectations.	
3	Discusses principles which underpin the assessment of students' practice learning and offers guidance on evidence.	Everyone on K216/K315
4.	Guidance on placement documentation and processes. (The main 'instructions' are provided on the proformas. You will find a summary of these forms on the back cover.)	
5	Guidance, actions and options for managing difficulties in a placement.	As required
6	Suggests practical activities and tasks to support students' professional development on placement.	K216/K315 students and practice teachers
Appendix 1	The Key Roles and National Occupational Standards, including the Matrix.	Everyone
Appendix 2	Statements of differential for stages of practice learning.	Everyone
Appendix 3	Maps the module content of both K216 and K315 to the components of good practice.	K216/K315 practice teachers
Appendix 4	Guidance on training, qualifying and support for practice teachers.	Practice teachers
Appendix 5	Northern Ireland Framework Specification for Degree in Social Work.	Everyone

Appendix 6	Effective practice learning within the context of a student's own workplace.	Everyone
Appendix 7	NIDSWP – Good practice for involving service users in social work education.	Everyone
Appendix 8	NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Students.	As required
Appendix 9	Start of placement and the calculation of practice learning days.	Practice teachers and students
Appendix 10	Further reading on practice learning.	Practice teachers and students
Appendix 11	Preparation for Practice and PLO Tuning in Frameworks.	Practice teachers and students
Appendix 12	Houston (2015) A Model for Supervision and Practice in Social Work.	Practice teachers and students
Appendix 13	Common abbreviations and acronyms used by The Open University.	Everyone

The OU, in accordance with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work (2015), strongly encourages the integration of academic and practice learning. Therefore, the practice experience from the Preparation for Practice days (K113) and placements (K216 and K315), are an integral part of the modules. The learning outcomes for practice learning are those identified in the relevant Module Guide. It is not possible to pass these modules without passing the placement. For further guidance please refer to Section 7.2 of the Assessment Guide on the module website.

Each stage of the degree carries different expectations about practice learning to meet regulatory and professional standards. It is also important to understand the different expectations between the following academic stages:

K113 Foundations for social work practice

This key introductory Stage 1 module is focused on acquiring the underpinning knowledge, values and skills to inform students' future practice. Students develop their knowledge of the key tasks and roles of social work, alongside the social work standards and codes of practice relevant to each nation of the UK. Students also develop academic skills to enable them to produce academic essays and reflective writing assignments. The module includes a distinct threshold assessment of students' readiness to begin practice learning with service users. All students are "prepared for practice" before they begin their placement, as set out in the Practice Learning Requirements for NI Social Work degree.

K216 Applied social work practice

The aim of K216 and its linked Stage 2 modules is to build on K102 and K113, so that students can apply their learning over 85 days of social work practice. Students will begin to apply their theoretical learning to practice, both during their practice learning and in their academic work. They will be acquiring a broader knowledge base and will be

expected to demonstrate that they can select and explain the application of appropriate aspects of knowledge to specific practice contexts. In their practice learning, students will be working towards the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) standards for qualification in the statement of Key Roles and National Occupational Standards.

K315 Critical social work practice

As part of their Stage 3 studies, students complete K315. The aim of this module is to reflect on, critically analyse and evaluate their role as student social workers. At this stage, students move on to develop a critical approach to theory and the evaluation of their own practice. They are expected to think critically about the ideas that they come across by comparing them with alternatives, thereby weighing up the relative value of different ideas. K315 students are expected to work more independently in practice than K216 students, applying their learning in a range of contexts and demonstrating that they can critically evaluate their own practice and that of other people. They work towards the Practice Learning Requirements for NI Social Work Degree and the Key Roles and National Occupational Standards, which requires greater autonomy and an ability to work with more complex situations than is expected of K216 students. In the K315 placement, students must provide evidence of their capacity to work as an accountable and responsible newly qualified practitioner (please refer to placement differentials in Appendix 2).

Professional standards

This section is relevant for students on all three stages of the Social Work degree. Please refer to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Students for full details about the regulatory and professional requirements, which can be found online via this link:

<https://niscc.info/app/uploads/2020/12/The-standards-of-conduct-for-social-work-students.pdf>

Please also refer to Appendix 8.

The professional standards of conduct and practice describe the behaviours, attitudes and values expected of registrants and are the benchmark of good practice. You will be required to sign a declaration that you agree to comply with these standards as part of the registration process. Social Work students follow the same standards of conduct for social work as professionally qualified social workers.

The professional standards of conduct and practice require social workers to be able to maintain Fitness to Practise, which is discussed below.

Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership

Students' practice learning in all three modules is assessed using the Key Roles and National Occupational Standards for social work. Further information, if required, can be obtained from the NIDPSW website <https://nidswp.net/documents/>

The main purpose of the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP) is to facilitate regional policies and approaches in areas such as student selection, course content, delivery and practice learning provision. The Partnership is accountable to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and reports to it on any aspect of course provision, including collaborative arrangements, resources, curriculum content and delivery arrangements, practice learning, future plans, evaluation and statistics.

The Key Roles and NOS guide the development of social workers' capabilities at each stage of their career and professional development. Students and practice teachers will need to refer to the relevant level of the Key Roles and NOS throughout their practice experience days or placement. Full details of the expectations for each of the Key Roles and NOS can be seen in Appendix 1 of this guide.

Fitness to Practise

Please refer to the Handbook for full details of how students should ensure their Fitness to Practise. Students should also familiarise themselves with the Professional Standards of Conduct and Practice, and the NISCC Fitness to Practise requirements available online at <https://nisc.info/fitness-to-practise/>

Please note that, in addition to achieving pass grades on assessed academic work and practice, students cannot gain a social work qualification if their conduct does not meet the requirements set out in the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Work Students.

Fitness to Practise includes being careful to avoid doing anything which may affect public protection, or confidence in the profession or the regulatory process. This may include matters not directly related to professional practice. Further details can be found in the Open University Fitness to Practise procedure, available on the Social Work Agency website and in the practice management section of the module website. This procedure applies to all students who are registered on the Social Work degree.

On admission to the Social Work degree, students provide information about their conduct, character and health. At the start of each practice learning module, students are formally asked to confirm that no new issues have arisen that might impact on their Fitness to Practise (see Part 2, Section 4.3). This is also recorded at the end of each placement, via the practice teacher report. **However, students have an ongoing responsibility to inform the OU of any such issues at the earliest opportunity.**

If Fitness to Practise concerns do arise, please refer to the Handbook and see the advice in Part 2, Section 5 of this guide.

Contacts and websites for the social work programme

If you wish to speak to someone about any of the information contained in this guide, you can contact your module tutor or your K216/K315 practice tutor. Please refer to the Handbook for all other contact details and websites.

Social Work Team Northern Ireland: Ireland-Social-Work@open.ac.uk

Part 1 Practice learning guidance for K113

This part contains a summary of the practice learning arrangements on K113. These arrangements apply even if practice learning is being completed at volunteer level within a social care organisation. You will find forms and additional guidance in the K113 module guidance. Details of the 'Preparation for Practice' assessment workshop guidance should be read along with the overall K113 Assessment Guide. **Students should also read the Introduction to this Practice Learning Guide.**

1 Practice skills days

K113 students must complete a structured programme of face-to-face practice skills workshops, which will enable them to take part in a formative and summative 'Preparation for Practice' assessment. The preparation for practice element is incorporated into the K113 programme and supports students in developing practical skills, confidence and competence in working directly with service users in social work practice. During the module the students will be required to practice and be observed carrying out a range of communication skills. This programme contributes to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) standards for qualification in the statement of Key Roles and National Occupational Standards and will help to prepare continuing students for their first assessed placement on K216.

K113 students are also required to undertake:

- at least 10 days of verified practice experience in a social care setting. This includes a recommendation that the student shadows the work of a qualified social worker for at least one day if this is possible to arrange.

As well as face-to-face skills workshops, OU tutors will run online tutorials, forums and discussions. Attendance at all these learning events is obligatory for all students, and alternative activities need to be negotiated with the tutor if exceptional circumstances cause a student to miss any part of these events.

It is a requirement that all students must complete the programme of practice skills, and submit the 'Preparation for Practice' assessment, in order to pass K113 and proceed to K216.

Sponsored Social Work Students

Students who are registered on the Social Work degree are also required to discuss and agree an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with their tutor. This is completed at the beginning of K113 and reviewed on an annual basis, prior to beginning each placement. This is an opportunity for students to reflect on and record their personal learning needs. They will think about what they need to do on PLO to address their learning needs, consider their existing knowledge and experience, and identify their learning needs in each of the key roles.

Students are required to undertake 15 individual practice development days (PDDs) over the duration of the degree programme. Students must keep a record of these, alongside a brief description and reflective commentary which their tutor can verify as completed.

Students can use the 10 verified practice days in K113 as part of this. It should be noted that the remaining days cannot be completed within the assessed periods of PLO.

Guidance on alternative ways to meet the PDDs is available on the Social Care Council website:

<https://learningzone.niscc.info/app/uploads/2022/09/Guidance-on-IPD-Days.pdf>

Students are required to maintain a Personal Development Workbook (sometimes called a 'Reflective Log') which will be used throughout the programme as a key learning tool. This will help with skills development on K113 and critical reflection of your learning and practice. Although the workbook will not be assessed, and students are not required to share the contents, students will be expected to use the material to inform certain assessed pieces of work. Students will be encouraged to be creative and flexible in terms of how they develop the workbook and will be supported by their module tutor and practice tutor in doing so.

2 Practice experience in a social care setting (10 days)

Students who are already employed or doing voluntary work in social care are not expected to complete any additional practice days during their K113 studies, although they may need to spend time doing activities that are not part of their usual workload.

If you are a K113 student who is not already working in a social care setting, it is your own responsibility to find and make all arrangements for the 10 practice experience days, and to identify an appropriate person who is able to act as a 'verifier' (see below). The OU is not able to assist in finding practice experience, but your module tutor may be able to offer you advice if you need it.

To ensure that you can complete the required number of practice experience days, you may do voluntary work in any kind of setting that provides social care. The practice experience days do not have to be consecutive and do not require you to be alone with service users.

It is also your responsibility to make arrangements with the agency to ensure that any requirements for Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (Access NI) checks are met.

The 10 practice experience days (to be verified by a line manager or supervisor) are designed to confirm that you:

- have the potential to conduct yourself in a professional manner
- have the potential to engage safely and effectively with service users
- are unlikely to present any inappropriate behaviour to service users or colleagues
- have been able to shadow a qualified social worker
- have had a conversation with a service user (see below).

Whether you are in your normal workplace or have negotiated practice experience on a short-term basis, you will be expected to undertake the following activities with the permission of your line manager (or the agency manager, if you are a K113 sponsored student):

1. Arrange the equivalent of 10 days of practice experience.
2. Arrange to have a conversation with a service user about their experience of using health, education or social care services and write a report of this conversation. This includes how you tuned into this conversation.
3. Find out about the main policies and guidance that influence the agency's decision about who it offers a service to, and how it protects both service users and staff.
4. You are also advised to try and arrange to shadow a qualified social worker for at least one day. Arrange to have a discussion with the social worker in advance and, if possible, afterwards, so that you understand their role, the legal basis for intervention (if applicable) and the methods of intervention they are using.

2.1 Guidance notes

It is your responsibility to make the arrangements for the practice experience activities. Doing this in an appropriate way can help to demonstrate your understanding of professional communication and conduct. Take care to be reliable, punctual, and prepare well for any shadowing activities and contact with service users.

The activities will prepare you for the assessment of 'Preparation for Practice' at the end of K113, and so indicate that you are suitable to proceed to more formal practice learning in the social work programme in K216. In the face-to-face workshops you will have the opportunity to practise and evaluate your skills. You may also be required to attend workshops via Microsoft Teams, however your tutor will advise you on the relevant platform to use.

This will prepare you for a summative and assessed recording of your communication skills in role-play scenarios at different points throughout the module. Service users and carers will be involved in these workshops where possible.

You will report on a conversation with a service user about what makes a good social worker. This includes how you tuned into this conversation. There are a number of tuning-in models available to students that will provide structure and support for this exercise (see Appendix 11 for examples).

We cannot be too prescriptive about the exact activities you should carry out, as this will depend on the opportunities offered by the setting and your role. However, try to find out as much as you can about the organisation you are working in. What services are provided, and to whom? Is the agency's work guided by legislation, and if not, how did it come into existence? What role do social workers play in relation to the agency? You should also find out about agency policies. For example, there may be written statements about the agency's values or aims; its approach to equality and diversity; how it maintains confidentiality; how to make complaints; how it handles concerns about safeguarding; and so on. This is not an exhaustive list and researching this kind of information will help you to become more aware of the context for social work practice.

Talk with your supervisor or manager, the other team members and service users to find out as much as you can about the agency and its services. Observe what goes on from day to day. Ask questions, listen, and try to keep notes or a reflective diary.

The conversation with the service users will enable you to practise your communication skills and to listen to the service user's perspective. It need not be a lengthy exchange, and it is expected to take place within the agency setting. You will need to prepare for this conversation with your tutor in the skills workshop and you may need to seek your supervisor's or line manager's advice on complying with the agency's policies. For example, if you are a volunteer, it may not be possible to ensure complete privacy for your conversation.

It is also advised that you try to arrange to shadow a qualified social worker for at least one day (this can be split into two half days if necessary). Try to build in some time beforehand to be 'briefed' and some time afterwards to discuss how the day went.

At the end of your 10 days, your verifier will need to confirm that you have demonstrated the ability to act in a professional manner. So, find out what the agency expects of its staff, read the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice, and be mindful of demonstrating professional behaviour (which you will read about in the K113 module).

3 Be clear about what is involved

It is advisable to be clear about the expectations for the practice experience days as early as possible in the module. You should arrange to identify and meet the person who will be acting as the verifier to confirm:

1. when the 10-day period of practice should begin
2. the nature of the activities you will carry out (this must include the opportunity to have a conversation with a service user and whether it will be possible to arrange to shadow a qualified social worker) in line with the guidance outlined earlier
3. the expectations of the person who is acting as verifier of your practice experience.

For sponsored students this will be done within their usual place of work and in consultation with the agency coordinator, who should, wherever possible, be present at this meeting.

If you are an independent K113 student, you will need to find a suitable person to act as a verifier in the agency in which you are doing your practice experience days. Please note that the OU does not provide the verifier.

You will be given an envelope containing advice and guidance to give to your verifier and we suggest that the form SWD6 'Confirmation of Student's Practice Experience' in this envelope, might provide a suitable checklist for you to use in these initial discussions.

4 The role of the verifier

You will need to have a verifier who confirms that:

- you have participated as a worker, a volunteer or an observer in the agency for at least 10 days during your studies on K113
- you have been able to shadow a qualified social worker
- you have had a conversation with a service user
- you have behaved in a professional way
- your conduct and attitude towards service users and others is appropriate to begin the process of practice learning.

The SWD6NI form – and full details about how to complete and submit it – are provided with your module materials. This is an essential document which will be considered along with your 'preparation for practice' assignment. Without a signed SWD6NI form you cannot pass K113.

Whether you are a sponsored or independent K113 student, the requirements for verifiers are the same. The verifier can be your line manager or supervisor if you are working in a social care setting or acting as a volunteer. Alternatively, they should be a senior member of staff in the agency. The verifier should be a qualified (and ideally registered) social worker or someone who holds an equivalent qualification, for instance a nurse, teacher, community worker or a doctor.

If an agency coordinator or a K113 student has any queries about whether someone is appropriately qualified to be a verifier, the matter may be discussed with a staff tutor in the NI social work team or with the K113 Module Chair, who can be contacted via the Social Work Degree team at wels-sw-practice@open.ac.uk.

5 Skills workshops and module materials

While working through the K113 module, you will be asked to complete activities that develop your reflection and practice skills, which will support your practice learning. You will also have the opportunity to practise your communication and other skills at the face-to-face workshops.

You will be expected to begin to apply some of the skills you learn in the workshops in your practice and reflect upon, and evaluate, your own development. You can use the model of reflection given in Block 1 Learning Guide 4 of the module materials. There are also suggestions after each workshop about how you might choose to work with other members of your tutor group to further practice and develop your skills using either the online rooms or the Adobe Connect room allocated for use of your tutor group alone.

The workshops can be held either midweek or on a Saturday. You will receive more details on this on your StudentHome page. They will be run by your OU tutor so will not only play an important role in developing your skills, but also provide you with the opportunity to get to know your tutor and the other students in your tutor group. In addition, there will be a range of online module activities that support your development of practice skills and the ability to reflect and think about aspects of practice. Full details are in the K113 Preparation for Practice and Practice Workshop Guide.

Attendance at the K113 face-to-face workshops and the online tutorial components of your study on the module is compulsory and is recorded as part of your preparation for practice assessment. If, in very exceptional circumstances, you are unable to attend any workshop or online tutorial, you will need to contact your tutor to negotiate alternative arrangements.

6 Assessment of Preparation for Practice

In order to progress on a social work degree, students in Northern Ireland are required to demonstrate their ability to meet the 'Preparation for Practice' Key Roles and National Occupational Standards (NOS) criteria. In studying K113 *Foundations for Social Work Practice*, the learning is designed to show how you are meeting these regulatory requirements. In Northern Ireland, the 'Northern Ireland Social Care Council' (NISCC) set the standards for qualification in the statement of Key Roles and NOS (see Appendix 1).

To be assessed as prepared for direct practice you need to evidence:

- awareness of social work values and your own value base, including self-awareness of your own biases and impact on working with diverse groups
- professional behaviour, basic knowledge of the social work role and the context of the social work practice in the processes of tuning in, assessment, care planning and evaluation with service users
- communication skills with service users, carers and children, and other professionals
- skills in reflective practice
- presentation of written information in a report format appropriate for social work practice
- awareness of knowledge base and models of intervention used in social work.

The Preparation for Practice is taught through:

- your study of the module materials
- attendance at several face-to-face and online workshops, where you will practise and evaluate your skills development.
- using the forums and Adobe Connect rooms to practise your skills with each other
- your 10 days practice experience, where your verifier will give feedback on how you are meeting the practice standards needed at this level
- keeping a reflective log to assist you with your skills development.

in addition to:

- the SWD6NI form completed by your verifier
- your record of attendance at workshops and other online learning events.

Preparation for practice is assessed by formative and summative assessments.

Formative assessment and feedback

TMA 01 Looking at personal and professional values.

TMA 03 Report of a conversation with a service user about what makes a good social worker. This includes how you tuned into this conversation.

TMA 04 Written reflection and evaluation of a practice experience.

Observation and recording of communication skills in formative role-play assessment.

Summative assessment

TMA 07 Summative assessment to meet the required standards for TMAs 01, 03, 04 and an observation and recording of your communication skills in a summative role-play assessment at the end of the module.

TMA 14 Completion of SWD6NI form by someone who knows your practice.

You will receive support and help through the module materials and workshops to complete this work, but it is not possible to pass K113 without achieving a pass on the Preparation of Practice aspect as this is a distinct threshold, i.e. you must pass it however well you do in the other aspects of your learning.

The 'preparation for practice' assignment is marked by OU tutors (who are qualified social workers), and quality assured by the K113 Practice Assessment Panel whose members include employers, service users and carers. The final decision is made by the Cluster Examinations and Assessment Board.

Part 2 Practice learning guidance for K216 and K315

1 Roles and responsibilities

1.1 The practice learning team

The 'practice learning team' consists of the student, the practice teacher, the OU practice tutor, and the on-site supervisor where the practice teacher is off-site (Figure 1).

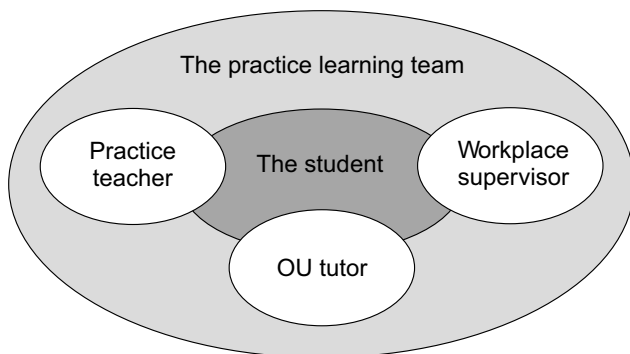


Figure 1 The practice learning team

1.2 The student

As a social work student, you are responsible for acquiring and applying the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve qualified social worker status. You will be supported by members of the practice learning team, through studying the K216 and K315 materials and participating in practice skills workshops. This may include online workshops.

If, in very exceptional circumstances such as serious illness or family bereavement, you are unable to attend, you may be permitted – with agreement from your tutor – to submit a piece of written work that will enable you to address some of the learning covered by the specific workshop or online learning event. Due to the regulatory requirement for practice skills days, evidence of satisfactory written work will need to be submitted with your Practice Assessment Report and reviewed by the Module Results Panel (exam board). Further information can be found on the K216 and K316 module websites (under Practice Management). Please note that the OU shares information about attendance with sponsoring employers, in accordance with our data sharing agreements.

You will need to gain a working knowledge of the Key Roles and National Occupational Standards (NOS), as well as the NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for social work students. Practice learning should be informed by the topics and 'practice links' in the K216 and K315 materials. In addition, you will be learning from the opportunities offered by each of your practice settings. Understanding how a particular agency meets national requirements and legal obligations, while making its own distinctive contribution to social work practice, is an integral and important part of practice learning.

You will also have to orientate yourself to the 'student role'. Do not underestimate what might be involved and how you may feel about it. Becoming a social work student may require the temporary suspension of a previously held management role or position of authority within an organisation. On the other hand, you may have previously occupied a role with less responsibility than that afforded to a student completing a placement. In either case, practice learning will mean approaching the role as a beginner, with the understanding that you must abandon some practices and arrangements that you previously took for granted, in order to develop a constructively critical outlook.

If one of your placements is in your own workplace, it is particularly important that you think through how the student role will differ from your previous role. Read Appendix 6 for useful guidance about what makes practice learning effective in these contexts.

Students should not find themselves with workloads that are excessive or the same as their previous duties. Guidance on the appropriate type and level of work can be found in Part 2 Section 2. Sufficient time must be available to you to critically reflect on what, why and how you are practising, and how the agency's practice, as well as your own, can be evaluated.

As a student you are responsible for:

- attending all scheduled meetings – the Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting; the interim assessment meeting; and the End of Practice Learning Review (EPLR) meeting (Section 4)
- completing the required number of practice learning days (85 days on K216 and 100 days on K315)
- participating in the compulsory practice workshops
- ensuring that the assessed practice information form (SWD3NI) is completed and sent to The Open University (Section 4)
- recording on the PLA proforma all agreements and arrangements made at the PLA meeting (Section 4)
- copying and distributing the record of the PLA meeting to all participants
- presenting the required number of Records of (critical) Practice to the interim assessment meeting, and preparing for this meeting
- submitting the required number of Records of (critical) Practice to the practice teacher two weeks before the end of the placement – note that failure to do this will delay your qualification progress (see Section 3 for specific requirements)
- completing an evaluation of the placement (Sections 2 and 4)
- informing members of the practice learning team, and in particular the practice tutor, of any information, changes or concerns you believe may affect the PLA, or any other matter which is likely to have a significant impact on your practice learning
- informing the practice learning team if any issues arise that might be inconsistent with the Standards of Conduct and Practice (and thus might affect your Fitness to Practise), including investigations of academic misconduct or plagiarism (Introduction and Section 5.6)
- informing the practice learning team at the PLA meeting of any needs that should be taken into consideration in the provision of the practice learning as a result of disability, language or culture (Section 4)
- sending the Practice Assessment Report (PAR) to the practice tutor for verification (Section 4).

You should consult your sponsor if you consider that you may need reasonable adjustments to be provided in your placement agency. Please refer to section 4.3 for further information.

1.3 The practice teacher

As the practice teacher, you are responsible for working with the student in four areas as follows:

Managing the quality of the placements:

- being responsible for directly arranging access to appropriate learning opportunities for the student, and/or
- supporting the student to identify and arrange to access placements, ensuring that arrangements are in hand for a placement induction (Section 2)
- monitoring the student's practice context to ensure that it supports appropriate practice placements for the student to learn about and demonstrate the key roles in practice
- taking appropriate action if the practice context does not appear to be providing appropriate learning opportunities, by informing and discussing issues with other members of the practice learning team to resolve the matter (Section 5)
- informing members of the practice learning team, and in particular the practice tutor, of any information, changes or concerns which affect the PLA, or any other matter which is likely to have a significant impact on the student's practice learning (Section 5)
- completing an evaluation of the placement (Sections 2 and 4).

Educating the student:

- identifying and discussing issues and learning opportunities arising from the student's practice
- helping the student to link their practice to the Key Roles and NOS, as well as the Standards of Conduct and Practice
- exploring with the student how social work knowledge, skills and values can be applied in practice
- helping students to make links between the Key Roles and NOS and the Professional Standards.

The practice teacher is not responsible for teaching the module materials. However, in supervision you may find it useful to encourage the student to articulate how K216 and K315 materials might be applied to their practice learning; for example, to explore particular aspects of social work theory and method. Appendix 3 maps the K216 and K315 components of good practice, social work approaches and practice links. These documents provide a summary of the module content which you may find useful for your discussions during supervision sessions.

Supporting the student:

- helping the student to clarify their learning needs
- being a sounding board and a source of advice in meeting the intellectual challenges posed by social work practice
- being an active listener and adviser in meeting the emotional challenges posed by social work practice
- helping the student to clarify any moral and ethical dilemmas involved in practice
- providing constructive feedback in relation to direct observations of practice, aimed at improving the student's ability to meet the Key Roles and NOS and the Standards of Conduct and Practice.

As the practice teacher, you may offer the student a close and supportive relationship, but this should not compromise your role as an assessor and a judge of the student's abilities to practise to the required standards. For example, the student should always remember that issues raised in supervision may be the subject of discussions between yourself and other colleagues for the purposes of collecting evidence.

Assessing the student's practice learning:

- using the relevant level – either first (Stage 2) or second (Stage 3) placement – (Key Roles and NOS) to assess practice, and to inform practice judgements (see Introduction and Appendix 1)
- guiding and encouraging the student to acquire evidence over the whole period of the practice learning that can be used to recommend a pass or a fail (Section 3)
- offering an interim assessment of the student's progress and whether they are on course to pass the placement at the interim assessment meeting (Section 4)
- making a recommendation of whether the student should pass or fail their K216 or K315 period of practice learning in the PAR.

The evidence that the practice teacher collates should be acquired from a range of sources (see Section 3.4). In contexts where the roles of practice teacher and on-site supervisor are split between two different people (see Section 1.4), the practice teacher is responsible for regular liaison with the on-site supervisor to gain knowledge of the student's progress. The practice teacher occupies a centrally important role in forming a comprehensive understanding of the student's progress in meeting the key roles and making a final recommendation.

1.4 The on-site supervisor

The roles of practice teacher and on-site supervisor are often combined in one person but, on some occasions, the roles will be split between two people if the practice teacher is not based on-site. The requirements for on-site supervisors are summarised in Section 1.8. For both K216 and K315, the on-site supervisor should:

- be located in the same office as the student's practice learning workplace
- be able to take responsibility for the day-to-day direction and supervision of the student's work in compliance with the agency's normal modes of work, service delivery, policy and procedures
- be aware of the Key Roles and NOS
- contribute to the Practice Assessment Report by providing summary comments.

The role of an on-site supervisor is to provide day-to-day supervision and management of the student. The on-site supervisor is also responsible for ensuring the student is working within the agency's policy and relevant statutory and professional standards. The student's workload should reflect the agency's recognition of the student's role. The on-site supervisor should respond to requests for information about the student by the practice teacher.

Information packs for on-site supervisors can be obtained by contacting hsc-sw-practice@open.ac.uk and requesting a pack.

1.5 The practice tutor

The practice tutor (previously known as the programme tutor) will be a qualified social worker with experience of teaching and learning. The practice tutor has been delegated a role by the OU staff tutor as their agent in making practice learning agreements and monitoring agreed arrangements. If the practice tutor has any doubts about whether the placement meets OU expectations, they should refer the matter to the staff tutor for appropriate action.

The practice tutor is responsible for:

- co-facilitating with the module tutor the introductory K216 or K315 workshop
- ensuring that the OU Social Work Degree programme requirements of placements are met in the PLA
- quality assuring the placement
- attending and facilitating the PLA meeting (Section 4.3)
- attending and facilitating the interim assessment and EPLR meetings
- ensuring that the proceedings of the interim assessment and EPLR meetings are recorded on the forms provided for this purpose
- copying and distributing these records to the participants
- sending a copy of the interim assessment proforma to the module team for quality assurance purposes (Section 3.5)
- checking that the interim assessment action plans have been implemented and for taking appropriate action in consultation with the relevant staff tutor
- informing the agency coordinator and the staff tutor of any possible breaches of the collaboration agreement on the part of the agency so that appropriate action to resolve the matter may be taken
- informing the agency coordinator of any identified conflict of interest that has not been resolved
- being accessible and providing appropriate advice and guidance concerning the Open University degree programme expectations and guidance to all members of the practice learning team and the agency coordinators
- convening additional meetings of the practice learning team to resolve any major difficulty that emerges after the PLA meeting (Section 5)
- taking minutes of any additional meetings (preferably using the template available on the tutor resources area of the module website)
- suspending the placement temporarily to allow for a serious disruption or concern to be addressed or investigated. **This should only be done following discussions with the staff tutor and the K216 or K315 module team chair, and guided by the advice in Section 5.**
- obtaining, verifying and submitting the PAR.

1.6 The module tutor

The module tutor, also known as an associate lecturer (AL), is not responsible for assessing the student's practice learning, but maintains regular communication with the student during the practice skills workshops and online learning events, as well as other module activities. The module tutor may consult with the staff tutor or the practice tutor concerning a student's practice learning needs arising from discussion in the workshops and online learning events. If there are concerns about a student's behaviour, the module tutor may also consult with the practice tutor.

1.7 The agency coordinator

The agency coordinator is a person designated by the student's sponsoring agency to liaise with members of the practice learning team and Open University Social Work Degree programme staff, including:

- the Open University social work staff tutor, who is the regional representative of The Open University, and who has line management responsibility for K216 or K315 module tutors and practice tutors
- the K216 or K315 module team chairs, who are usually based at Walton Hall in Milton Keynes, and who have academic responsibility for the presentation of these modules
- the K216 or K315 curriculum managers, who are based at Walton Hall in Milton Keynes, and who have administrative responsibility for the presentation of these modules
- other administrative staff based at Walton Hall.

The agency coordinator may, at their own discretion and in agreement with the student and other members of the practice learning team, attend the PLA meeting, the interim assessment meeting and the EPLR meeting.

The agency coordinator is responsible for:

- making arrangements for the provision of a placement for the student, whether that is in the student's own agency or workplace or elsewhere. The agency coordinator may also liaise with a practice learning coordinator within an organisation to arrange placements*
- facilitating agreements between The Open University and the sponsoring agency about the nature and quality of the student's practice learning environment (Section 2)*
- ensuring that a student's colleagues and managers are made aware of the worker's change of status and role to that of student social worker (Section 2)
- informing all members of the practice learning team and other relevant programme staff of any changes to the PLA that are required by the sponsoring agency – this includes notification of changes in on-site supervisor or practice teacher, and any material changes in the workplace which are likely to have a bearing on the quality of practice learning for the student
- informing the practice learning team of agency response and action in respect of any previously identified conflict of interest (Section 5.4)
- in consultation with the student, ensuring that the OU is informed of any issues that may affect a student's Fitness to Practise (Introduction and Section 5)
- contributing to the resolution of any serious concern reported by any member of the practice learning team (Section 5).

* The NIDSWP organises placements for Stage 3 students and on specific occasions may organise placements for Stage 2 students.

1.8 Qualification requirements for practice teachers and on-site supervisors

Each student will need a designated practice teacher. The practice teacher for K315 should be a different person from the practice teacher for K216.

Practice teachers of social work students are required to be registered social workers with NISCC and hold a recognised Practice Teacher qualification (or be undertaking the training) in supporting or assessing practice. Where a qualified practice teacher is not based in the workplace, the student will need an on-site supervisor (Section 5) in addition to an off-site (longarm) practice teacher.

The OU requirements follow the Standards for Practice Learning for the Degree in Social Work (2018).

Practice teachers in training should be supported by a practice assessor who holds a recognised qualification in supporting or assessing practice.

Table 3 The qualification requirements for practice teachers and on-site supervisors

The qualification requirements for practice teachers and on-site supervisors		
Role	K216	K315
Practice teacher	Hold a recognised social work qualification; Comply with the NI Social Care Council registration requirements; Have a minimum of two years post-qualifying social work experience following successful completion of AYE or equivalent; Hold a recognised qualification in supporting or assessing practice; Or Are currently undergoing training and under supervision for a recognised qualification in supporting or assessing practice and is verified by an experienced assessor;	Hold a recognised social work qualification; Comply with the NI Social Care Council registration requirements; Have a minimum of two years post-qualifying social work experience following successful completion of AYE or equivalent; Hold a recognised qualification in supporting or assessing practice; Or Are currently undergoing training and under supervision for a recognised qualification in supporting or assessing practice and is verified by an experienced assessor;
On-site supervisor (see also Section 1.4)	May be a registered social worker (but not essential) Competent to provide day-to-day practice supervision of social work students Must be located in the same office as the student's practice learning workplace	May be a registered social worker (but not essential) Competent to provide day-to-day practice supervision of social work students Must be located in the same office as the student's practice learning workplace

In advance of the placement commencing, practice teachers will be emailed all relevant documentation required for supporting students on the PLO.

These materials will also be available via the Social Work Agency website, which provides employers, practice assessors/educators and workplace supervisors with guidance, resources and practice learning proformas for the OU Social Work Programme. The website can be accessed here:

[Social Work Agency](#)

Please note that to access the website, you need to be registered with the OU. An email is sent to Practice Teachers with details of how to register.

In addition, all Practice teachers must have a working knowledge of the Key Roles and NOS, as well as the Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Work Students.

For both K216 and K315, the practice teacher should not be:

- someone with direct line management responsibility for the student within the student's sponsoring agency
- someone who owns or is a director or chief executive of the student's sponsoring agency.

For further advice about potential conflicts of interest, see Section 5.4.

Please note: If the practice teacher role and the on-site supervisor role are combined (see also Section 1.4), the conditions about who can and cannot be the practice teacher still apply.

1.9 Onsite-supervisor requirements

For K216 and K315, on-site supervisors do not necessarily have to be registered social workers. Provided the above requirements are met, it is for the agency manager to ensure that an on-site supervisor is competent to provide day-to-day practice supervision of social work students.

Where it is necessary to appoint an on-site supervisor, provided the above requirements are met, it is quite appropriate and, in some cases, necessary for the on-site supervisor to be the student's usual line manager. For example, in statutory contexts it may be difficult for someone other than a line manager to take responsibility for the day-to-day on-site supervision of a student. It is also permitted for a student's colleague to act as both practice teacher and on-site supervisor, as long as the conditions set out in Table 3 are met. However, in both cases, any potential conflicts of interest should be discussed by the practice learning team with agreed provision for addressing any related problems recorded in the PLA.

2 Ensuring quality of experience in practice learning (including placement requirements)

2.1 Overview of placement requirements

The placement must meet the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's practice learning requirements. That is, the student must be able to demonstrate that they have met the Key Roles and NOS at the appropriate level (see Section 4). Assessed practice learning should be contrasting in order for students to understand, acquire and demonstrate transferability of knowledge, skills and values in practice. Practice learning should therefore be structured over the course of the degree to allow students to gain experience of:

- carrying out statutory social work tasks;
- at least two different settings;
- providing services to at least two service user groups;
- group care;
- working with at least two other professions;
- the contested nature, scope and purpose of social work in a diverse society;
- participating in formal decision – making forums;
- participating in and presenting evidence in courts or tribunals or other formal hearings; and
- applying community development approaches in social work

Every social work student will have at least one PLO in a statutory setting and at least one PLO with a focus on children. In some cases, it is possible that one of the student's PLOs, could meet both requirements. Where the PLO does not offer all of these experiences, the practice teacher may negotiate supplementary opportunities.

2.2 Statutory social work tasks involving legal interventions

All students are required to gain experience of statutory interventions in **one** of their placements. Following the recommendation of the Social Work Reform Board (2010), statutory interventions are defined according to the nature of the social work tasks undertaken by the student on placement, and not by the setting or type of placement.

The requirement for undertaking statutory social work tasks is made on the basis that students are working under appropriate supervision and provided with appropriate levels of support, taking into account the challenging nature of the work and the individual needs of the student.

In the final placement setting the student should not be the sole social work representative in the agency in order to support the development of professional identity. This person would normally be the practice teacher or – if the practice teacher is off-site – the on-site supervisor (if they are a qualified social worker) may fulfil this requirement (see Section 1.4 for further advice).

Students should not hold case responsibility for formal assessment processes that include risk/safeguarding/child or adult protection.

The Professional Requirements place expectations on students to act within the limits of their knowledge and skills, recognising that they are not yet autonomous practitioners, but should work with the appropriate level of supervision.

The following box gives some examples of appropriate statutory interventions. A 'statutory social work task' has the quality of being something that a social worker or social care worker must do or has the power to do as a result of legislation. In performing a 'statutory social work task', the social worker may have limited discretion in the timing or nature of the task, although there may be discretion in the use of self, and in communication of the nature of the tasks to service users and others. Such statutory tasks must be within the remit of a social work student to carry out and should take into account the relevant Key Roles and NOS criteria.

Some examples of appropriate statutory interventions

Mental health

Contributing to the provision of statutory after-care supervision and support to a formerly detained patient who has returned to live in the community. Contributing to an assessment of a patient who may need to be detained in hospital. Such assessments are undertaken formally by an Approved Social Worker, but students may assist in the process if appropriate.

Youth offending

As a member of a multidisciplinary Youth Offending Team, or other statutory agency, contributing to the supervision of a young offender sentenced to compulsory supervision in the community.

Learning disability and older people

Contributing to a community care assessment of a person over the age of 18 who may be eligible for a statutory assessment of their community care needs.

Children and family work

As a member of a local HSC Trust children and families team, contributing to an assessment of need, including issues of abuse and neglect.

As a staff member of a voluntary organisation working with children subject to care proceedings; making a report to the HSC Trust staff for the purposes of assessment of need; or providing evidence, either written or oral, to a court regarding the needs of a child.

Clearly, some placements will have better or more easily available opportunities for involvement in statutory social work tasks. Even if there are limitations, the PLA should consider the issues concerned and plan, for example, contact with other appropriate agencies for the student to undertake some aspect of a 'statutory social work task'. The student must be able to experience and reflect on the statutory nature of some social work tasks. Specifically, the student must learn and be able to explain (a) why their professional discretion is or can be limited by statute, and (b) what differences are inherent to social

work practice if it is backed by a statutory power compared with social work practice that is not.

K216 placements (experience of statutory interventions)

It can be seen from the examples of statutory tasks that some of these can be undertaken by a K216 student under the supervision of a qualified and registered practitioner. The above guidance still applies, with two important provisos recognising that K216 students are working to different stage indicators in evidencing the Key Roles and NOS criteria than those used for K315, and that at this level they are not expected to be autonomous practitioners. If statutory duties are undertaken on the K216 placement, it is important that:

- The work is in keeping with the Standards of Conduct and Practice which require students to act within the limits of their knowledge and skills, with the appropriate level of support and supervision.
- The work should be of the kind which provides the student with a suitable learning opportunity to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and values set out in the 'end of first placement' level of the Key Roles and NOS (see Appendix 1).

2.3 Contrast between first and second placements

The NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice are based on the principle that a social worker trains and qualifies with a broad experience and understanding of the profession, in a variety of settings and service user groups. This means that all students need to be offered broad practice experience to be able to meet the practice learning requirements for the NI Degree in Social Work (2010).

To meet the requirements in Part 2 Section 2.1, all students must have a different experience in their first and final placements, including 'different settings and service user groups'. **There should be a clear contrast between the placements offered for K216 and K315. Primarily, this contrast should be between two substantially different service user groups.**

Assessed practice learning should be contrasting in order for students to understand, acquire and demonstrate transferability of knowledge, skills and values in practice.

At least one placement must be different from the setting within which the student is employed

The requirements for two contrasting settings need to be considered before the placement for K216 is planned and again before K315. The PLA meeting must bear in mind that whatever the proposed placement, the student must be able to demonstrate the relevant Key Roles and NOS requirements for each stage.

For the second PLO at stage 3, students will be asked to complete a student profile and individual learning plan with a practice tutor. This identifies any learning needs from the first PLO, individual circumstances that need to be presented to the NIDSWP and explores potential placements for K315. In most circumstances, data from the student profile is used by the NIDSWP allocations team, to make arrangements for the second PLO. Contrast requirements will be taken into consideration at that stage. Some HSC Trusts may be permitted to arrange the second PLO for their own sponsored students, however the same guidance should be followed with regard to learning requirements and a contrast to the student's first PLO.

There may be 'grey areas' in looking for contrast between placements in K216 and K315. In such cases, the practice tutor should discuss this with the staff tutor in the Social Work Northern Ireland team, or the module team chair for a decision.

A decision can only be reached in such circumstances if form SWD15NI (Practice Learning Contrast Proposal) has been completed and submitted to the relevant staff tutor and module team chair. This form can be obtained from the social work programme website and should be completed by the sponsoring agency on behalf of the student. The NIDSWP will also be involved in such decision-making, as they are responsible for allocating Stage 3 PLO.

2.4 A formal period of induction to the placement

It is an OU requirement that all students have a specified and formal induction period for each placement, even when it takes place in their own agency.

When the placement is in the student's own workplace or agency, it may be more appropriate to consider induction as a formal period of transition to the student role. Here the emphasis may be on looking at the workplace afresh to consider how the student can orientate themselves to a different role in a familiar environment (see Appendix 6).

The OU's own evaluation and research has also shown the importance of students having a designated period of induction. Even when the placement team is a familiar one, a formal induction can help the student and their colleagues acclimatise to their changed roles.

The practice teacher is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in hand for a placement induction. The template for the Practice Learning Agreement (form SWD4NI), and discussion at the PLA meeting, can be used to identify the content of an induction programme. The areas likely to be covered include:

- clarifying the expectations of the student role (see Sections 1.2, 2.6, 2.7 and Appendix 6)
- clarifying expectations about time keeping, absenteeism, relationships, dress code, etc.
- familiarisation with colleagues, team and roles
- relevant legislation
- agency policies and procedures, Health and Safety, Lone worker, Information Governance (including those identified on form SWD4NI)
- familiarisation with placement agency and working environment
- visits to relevant teams and agencies, and arrangements for shadowing colleagues
- support and supervision arrangements (including those identified on form SWD4NI)
- lines of accountability, and who to contact for advice and guidance should team members or managers be unavailable
- learning and assessment arrangements (including those identified on form SWD4NI)
- study leave arrangements while on placement.

2.5 Placements in the student's own workplace

The student can do one of their placements in their own normal workplace setting while studying K216 or K315, typically this will be the first PLO. However, the practice learning team will need to be mindful of a number of issues:

1. The student's colleagues and managers must be made aware of the worker's change of status and role within the workplace (Section 1.2).
2. The requirement for a placement induction applies even when a student is in their own workplace
3. It would be inappropriate and damaging to the quality of the learning experience if the student were to carry a workload that was the same or similar to the one they had before studying K216 or K315.
4. Regardless of their previous experience in the team, the workload – in type and volume – should be consistent with the student's new status and reflect the opportunities needed to meet the Key Roles and NOS at the appropriate level (see the Introduction and Section 2). The student should also be offered appropriate support and supervision (see also Sections 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.8 and 2.9).
5. The student should be provided with broadly similar working conditions to those of other personnel working in the same workplace. For instance, they should have equivalent access to telephones, desks, computers, photocopying and other essential facilities.
6. All members of the practice learning team and the agency coordinator should be mindful of the contrast requirements set out in Section 2.4. The placement in K315 should not be in the student's workplace if the one in K216 was in their workplace.
7. Appendix 6 contains suggestions, based on OU research, which will help to ensure effective practice learning in the student's own workplace.

2.6 Adequate study time and practice learning

The sponsoring agency and/or the agency providing the placement and the practice learning team need to be aware that the student needs time to study and reflect on their practice.

Students enrolled on K216 and K315 will continue with academic study when the 85 or 100 day PLO comes to an end, as the module does not finish when PLO ends. At this time, students return to their sponsored employment. For the remainder of the module, students will be required to undertake 16–18 hours of study per week and the OU recommends that students are permitted to take one half-day study leave per week, from their sponsored employment. There may also be some overlap, where students are finishing the first (October start) module, while also completing the second module (K216/315). Students and employers may wish to increase study leave during this time. The OU recommends that while students are undertaking two modules simultaneously, students should take one day per week study leave, as they will be required to undertake 32–36 hours of study per week.

As these are only OU recommendations, it is advised that the issue of study time is negotiated between the employer and the student at the outset, and some agreement is reached around this.

During practice learning periods it is a regulatory requirement that students have seven days study leave at Stage 2 and eight days at Stage 3.

Study time should be used to make links between all Open University modules being studied and their practice. Study time should also be used in relation to reflective tasks and other work that arises from supervision. Students and practice teachers are advised that, as far as possible, supervision should not take place on the day designated as study time.

Recall days

During the practice learning period students will be recalled to university for supplementary teaching. These recall days may be in person in the OU Belfast Office or online. Recall days are an integral part of the programme and an essential requirement for students. Typically, during K216, students will have four recall days and three during K315. Students and practice teachers will be notified of recall day dates at the beginning of the placement.

Annual leave

As employees of their sponsoring agency, OU students are entitled to take annual leave during the placement process. However, it has been agreed with the regional partnership that this leave needs to be planned in advance, limited to six days and agreed at the initial placement meeting. This is extremely important to enable the placement experience to run as smoothly and to be as effective as possible.

2.7 Supervision requirements

The supervisory roles and responsibilities of the practice teacher and the on-site supervisor are outlined in Sections 1.3 and 1.4. The requirements are described in more detail below.

Frequency of on-site supervision

If the on-site supervisor is the line manager for the student, supervision should be offered on the same basis as to any other qualified colleague. Normally, there would be an expectation of a fixed pattern of one-to-one supervision meetings and that the on-site supervisor would make themselves accessible to the student to answer any queries, especially at the start of practice learning. The on-site supervisor should play a significant part in inducting the student to their role and to the normal processes and procedures of the workplace. In situations where the on-site supervisor is a colleague or member of a team with no previous line management responsibility, the frequency and pattern of one-to-one supervision should be negotiated as part of the PLA.

Frequency of practice teacher supervision

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards for Practice Learning (March 2018) outline that each student should have individual development supervision of 2 hours per fortnight up to the mid-point of Stage 3. This is in addition to professional case supervision and any other support activity. Supervision is viewed as a shared responsibility between the student and practice teacher (and on-site facilitator/supervisor), in terms of agreeing agenda, recording and completing agreed tasks. Currently most agencies offer weekly supervision of 1.5 hours, and they also provide supervision throughout the full period of practice learning at both Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Where a model of fortnightly group supervision is offered to students, this must be no less than 2 hours. This must also be supplemented by alternate fortnightly individual supervision of 2 hours duration. In some HSC Trusts and practice learning centres, peer supervision is organised with other social work students, often from other universities. This is an excellent resource whereby students can learn from and support each other. This peer supervision is in addition to individual supervision with the practice teacher.

A supervision contract outlining the detail of how the practice teacher and student will work together, particularly in addressing concerns, should be completed in addition to the practice learning agreement.

Confidentiality in supervision by the practice teacher

The purpose of supervision is to support the student by providing opportunities to reflect on how they can practise or have practised in a way which meets the relevant level of the Key Roles and NOS. It is also an important means by which the practice teacher can assess the development of a student's practice and determine whether the student has practised according to the relevant key roles. While the relationship should be open and able to sustain mutual positive regard, it is not a private relationship and there are limits to the confidentiality of information exchanged in supervision meetings. It is important for the student to understand that the practice teacher will discuss the student's progress with line managers, colleagues and other professionals from time to time. This may involve raising issues with them that have emerged in supervision.

Recording supervision

It is important to keep written records of supervision, as the practice teacher may wish to draw on these in making assessment judgements. It is also important to record any concerns raised by the practice teacher or the student, and the agreed actions to address these. Further guidance is given in Section 3.4.

2.8 Students with prior experience of social work

Some students on the OU Social Work Degree will come into social work training with substantial relevant experience. The prior work experience of a student may be helpful but, to get the most from their studies, a student must be open to new ideas and new ways of looking at old problems and issues. All members of the practice learning team should aim to support the student in this transition.

Regardless of their previous experience, students' workload – in type and volume – should be consistent with their new status and reflect the opportunities needed to meet the Key Roles and NOS at the appropriate level (see Introduction and Section 2). The student should also be offered appropriate support and supervision

Students should not be assessed on the basis of what they have learned before joining the programme. Rather, assessment of their practice learning should be based on their current ability to meet the relevant level of the Key Roles and NOS. It would be unfair, prejudicial and inappropriate to assess a student on the basis of their past experience and practice.

During their study a student may reveal a matter to a member of the practice learning team that happened before studying K216 or K315 that raises serious concerns about the student's past practice. If this occurs, the issue should be shared between members of the practice learning team and discussed with the agency coordinator. If this results in either disciplinary action and/or police investigation, the placement may need to be temporarily suspended while the issues are investigated (see Section 5).

2.9 Evaluating placements

In accordance with the NISCC requirements, and in line with the government agenda to improve and maintain standards, we will carry out a formal evaluation of placements every year. This enables the OU to collate feedback from across the programme, consider it within the quality assurance processes and make changes where necessary. All students and practice teachers are required to complete a questionnaire which needs to be submitted electronically. The evaluation questionnaires (SWD17NI for students and SWD18NI for practice teachers), can be found on the module and Social Work Agency websites. See Section 4 for details.

The University has a responsibility to share the information provided on placement evaluation forms with sponsoring agencies. Collated responses will be shared with the agency coordinators. If an individual evaluation raises issues about the placement setting, practice teacher and/or on-site supervisor, the staff tutor will share this information with the agency coordinator at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken.

3 Principles of practice learning assessment in K216 and K315

This section discusses principles which underpin the assessment of students' practice learning and offers guidance on required and optional sources of evidence.

The degree seeks to prepare students to work in a broad range of situations and to respond to and contribute to change in the professional context. During their practice learning, students strive to take forward three main elements of professional development. Firstly, fundamentally and at the centre of everything, there is **ethical practice** in terms of the application of the professional value base. The NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Work Students (2019) and the 'Statement of Expectations' from service users/carers (see *Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work*, NISCC: 2021) outline the required professional standards and expectations of social workers. Secondly, **professional competence** needs to be demonstrated in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills to promote service users' well-being in preparing for and delivering direct practice. Finally, there is the need for **professional responsibility and accountability** in seeking to understand and work within the contested nature, scope and purpose of social work in a diverse society. The interrelationship and bringing together of these three elements are fundamental to 'developing professional social workers whose practice is founded on values, is carried out in a skilled manner and is informed by knowledge, critical analysis and reflection' (DHSSPS, NISCC, 2015).

3.1 Differences in expectations and assessment at Stages 2 and 3

For a practice teacher to recommend a pass in the Practice Teacher Report, a student will have to demonstrate competency at the relevant level, either Stage 2 or Stage 3.

The difference between Stage 2 and Stage 3 relates mainly to the complexity of social work intervention required and the degree of autonomy and criticality expected. In addition, students must gain experience of statutory intervention on one of the placements. Progression between the two stages is characterised by the development of students' ability across the Key Roles and NOS.

One of the main areas of difference between Stage 2 and Stage 3 periods of Practice Learning is the complexity of work expected of students during their first and final periods of practice learning. Consideration should be given to the level of responsibility that students are expected to take, particularly in relation to statutory work or more high-risk situations. It is advisable that practice teachers clarify arrangements within their own organisation in relation to the allocation of work to students undertaking practice learning. Where the complexity of work is deemed less suitable for someone in training, one would expect to see students undertaking more co-working arrangements with qualified staff. It would also be expected that students at Stage 3 would require less overall guidance than those at Stage 2.

Students will be working towards one of the following:

- K216 – In their practice learning, students will be working towards the 'end of first placement' level of the Key Roles and NOS.
- K315 – Students will be working towards the 'end of second placement/completion' level of the Key Roles and NOS.

During the K216 placement, students are expected to meet the requirements at Stage 2 under the supervision of a qualified and registered practitioner.

K315 students must meet Stage 3 Key Roles and NOS and should demonstrate the capacity to work as an accountable and responsible practitioner. Refer to Appendix 2

3.2 Northern Ireland Framework Specification for Degree in Social Work and requirements for assessment

The six key roles laid out in the **Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work** (DHSSPS: 2015) detail the key core skills, knowledge and standards that are required from all students to meet the required standard of competence. In the framework specification document, the links with the **National Occupational Standards for Social Work (NOS)** (2011) and the **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Benchmark Statements: – Academic Standards – Social Work**, 2016 are made explicit. The key roles are further broken down into **20 standards** which are required in order to fulfil these key roles. The standards are the general benchmark statements that explain the professional practice components of each key role. Students must demonstrate that they have achieved the Key Roles and associated NOS whilst, as indicated above, adhering to and demonstrating the values and principles stated within the Social Care Standards of Conduct for Social Work Students (2019) and the Statement of Expectations (NISCC: 2021) from individuals, families, carers, groups and communities who use services or those who care for them.

The Six Key Roles of Social Work:

Key Role 1 Maintain professional accountability

Key Role 2 Practise professional social work

Key Role 3 Promote engagement and participation

Key Role 4 Assess needs, risks and circumstances

Key Role 5 Plan for person-centred outcomes

Key Role 6 Take actions to achieve change

For the practice teacher to recommend a pass in the Practice Assessment Report (PAR) the student will have met the Key Roles and the 20 NOS as set out in the NI Framework Specification of the NI degree (2015). The student must provide evidence of meeting the 20 NOS. The practice teacher will need to collate evidence of the student's ability in relation to the Key Roles and NOS as a whole. The evidence may come from a range of sources:

- supervision
- service user or carer feedback
- Records of (critical) Practice
- direct observations
- recorded sessions with service users
- process recording
- on-site supervisor feedback
- feedback from colleagues and associated professionals
- reports, letters and recordings produced by the student.

The Practice Assessment Report requires the practice teacher to detail how the students has met all of the Key Roles and NOS across the Records of Practice and Direct Observations. They are the only evidence that is required in the PAR. The practice teacher however can refer to other evidence in the report that has informed the assessment of the student's practice. Refer to Appendix 1.

3.3 Social work values

As students' progress through the programme, they will have many opportunities to develop an understanding of social work values, and practice teachers will play a key role in helping students consider how to apply values in practice. It may be helpful for practice teachers and students to consider the various ways in which the Key Roles and NOS link with social work values.

It is essential that social work practice is founded on, informed by, and capable of being judged against, a clear value base and ethical principles. This is because of the responsibilities which social workers carry; the ethical problems and dilemmas they face and the potential influence and impact they may have on the lives of people. Values are not just ideals. They are a set of practical criteria to inform and guide actions, decision-making, and the relationship between the social worker and others. Values are determinants of behaviour and should be integral to social work practice. National and international professional social work organisations have produced guidance on values to underpin social work practice. These may be a useful reference for both course providers and students.

To be competent against the standards contained in the NI Framework Specification, (2015) social work students must demonstrate that they have achieved the performance criteria whilst adhering to and demonstrating the values and principles stated within the NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Work. The following values inform and underpin the standards of conduct and practice:

Social work students must:

- Respect the rights, dignity and inherent worth of individuals.
- Work in a person-centred way.
- Treat people respectfully and with compassion.
- Support and promote the independence and autonomy of service users.
- Act in the best interests of service users and carers.
- Uphold and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure the care they provide is safe and effective and of a high quality.

Please see

<https://niscc.info/app/uploads/2020/12/The-standards-of-conduct-for-social-work-students.pdf>

In working towards the Key Roles and NOS, there are different expectations for students on K216 and K315, as explained in this section. Students on K216 are required to develop an understanding of values and recognise issues and dilemmas, managing these with the support of their practice teacher. As they progress to K315 students will need to work more independently in applying values and managing the dilemmas arising from more complex situations.

3.4 Guidance on sources of evidence

In writing the Practice Assessment Report (PAR), practice teachers should cite a variety of evidence sources to support their assessment. This includes material generated as part of the student's work on placement, such as reports, record keeping and supervision notes. With the exception of direct observations and Records of (critical) Practice, copies of the evidence will not be required. However, we would strongly advise practice teachers to keep copies of all evidence for their own records, and in case this information is requested by the Practice Assessment Panel.

3.4.1 Records of practice on placement

There are different proformas and 'Records of Practice' for K216 and K315 which are used as sources of evidence to demonstrate student's work on placement and how they have met the Key Roles and NOS. These documents, simply known as 'Records', include 'Records of Practice' (K216), 'Records of Critical Practice' (K315) and 'Records of (critical) practice (service user/carer feedback)' for both K216 and K315. Where a proforma is called a record of 'critical' practice, this refers to K315 only. All of these records support the student's learning as they:

- can be used in supervision, as well as in the practice workshops, and will also form part of the Practice Assessment Report (PAR).
- provide a structured framework for describing, reflecting and evaluating work done during the placement.
- are developmental tools that help to link academic learning with practice.

The Records contain a space for the practice teacher to provide feedback to the student and they can be discussed in supervision meetings. They give the practice teacher an insight into how the student describes and reflects on their practice. This can help the practice teacher to monitor and support the student's progress in meeting the Key Roles, by offering them guidance on their application of relevant knowledge, skills and values.

Records of (critical) practice and Records of (critical) practice (service user/ carer feedback) are a valuable resource to draw on when preparing the end of module assessment (EMA). In the EMA students are asked to reflect on a piece of work they have done in their placement, and to relate this to the theories and concepts explored in the module materials. Students will need to retain and reflect on their K216 Records when planning for their future learning and professional development in K315.

Students are expected to prepare a draft Record of (critical) practice for the workshops with module tutors on K216 or K315. Time will be set aside to focus on Records of (critical) practice that are relevant to a particular area of practice. This gives students another opportunity to explore their practice learning in the light of knowledge, theories and concepts explored in the modules.

How many are needed?

The student can compile any number of Records during the period of practice learning but six are recommended. One or two Records should be presented at the K216 interim assessment meeting, and three must be submitted with the K216 PAR. For K315, two Records should be submitted at the interim assessment meeting, and four with the PAR. This is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 Records during the period of practice learning

Event	K216	K315
Interim assessment meeting	At least one (preferably two) records should be presented to the practice learning team.	Two records should be presented to the practice learning team.
	They will provide the practice learning team with some insight and evidence in relation to the student's practice. Importantly, they will offer an opportunity for the student to articulate and justify their practice. The records submitted at the interim assessment meeting may also be submitted to the practice teacher as part of the PAR.	
PAR	Three records of practice must be submitted. One of the three must be a record of practice (service user/carer feedback).	Four records of (critical) practice must be submitted. One of the four must be a record of (critical) practice (service user/carer feedback).
	The student and the practice teacher must discuss and negotiate which records of (critical) practice would provide best evidence of the meeting the relevant level within Key Roles and NOS	

There are two 'themed' records of practice required over the duration of both practice learning placements, one for Group care and one for Community development. These are additional to these (critical) records of practice but are a core practice learning requirement and should be included in the PAR

What should the Records contain?

The various Record proformas include guidance for how the student should approach the task. Students should also observe the requirements for word length and academic referencing stated on the proforma and maintain confidentiality (Section 3.4.3). A Record must not reveal the names of any service users or agencies, or any information that may disclose their identities. Students should discuss any concerns about managing confidentiality with their practice teacher. The following provides additional context for the different types of record. A Record of (critical) practice is a record of an interaction between the student and a service user or an activity which can be linked to social work values and the Key Roles and NOS (see Section 3.3 and Appendix 1). It is a reflective piece of writing rather than a case history or a work summary. In the Record of (critical) practice the student should give:

- a brief description of the activity or interaction selected by the student – a 'snapshot' of practice
- a brief description of the intended goals of the interaction
- a critical analysis of, and reflection on, the piece of work, in the light of relevant knowledge, skills, theory and method, values and professional ethics and dilemmas
- an evaluation which reviews whether goals were achieved (and the contributing factors)

- a reflection about the learning gained, including possible alternative approaches; lessons learned for future interactions with service users; a specific area of learning to be pursued in future.

The Record of (critical) practice (service user/carer feedback) requires students to reflect on what they have learned from the process of seeking feedback about their practice from service users and carers. Students should reflect on their interactions with service users and carers across their practice learning as a whole. For this reason, it should be completed during the second half of the placement. In preparing to write the Record of (critical) practice (service user/carer feedback), students will find it helpful to reflect on all of the pieces of work undertaken on their placement so far. The Record does not need to focus on single cases and can include feedback collected at any time during the placement.

The proforma gives detailed guidance on how to write this record, including:

- methods used to collect feedback
- how service user and carer feedback has been used to develop and change the student's practice
- how supervision with the practice teacher has contributed to developing practice and reflection
- how the module materials have helped develop practice with service users and carers

There are important differences between K216 (Stage 2) Records of practice and the K315 (Stage 3) Records of critical practice. The differences between word length and format are there to accommodate the potential for the student to record a greater degree of analysis and evaluation of their practice on K315 than on K216. The emphasis in K315 is on analysis and evaluation. Appropriate use of module materials and referencing is expected for both stages, but by K315 students should be making full use of the set book and other relevant sources in addition to OU materials. The Record of *critical* practice is one of the ways in which practice can be assessed in terms of Levels 2 or 3 and, in particular, to make judgements about whether or not the student is practising with an appropriate level of independence and criticality.

Practice teacher feedback

When it comes to the Practice Assessment Report (PAR), the Records will be important sources of evidence to demonstrate the student's ability to meet some of the Key Roles and NOS. The practice teacher is therefore asked to provide, via the proforma, an evaluative comment on how the Records provide evidence of the student's strengths and areas for development in relation to the relevant Key Roles and NOS. It is unlikely that a single piece of work will provide evidence for all key roles. At the same time, some of the evidence will be relevant to more than one key role. Practice teachers will need to make a judgement about this. Further advice about assessing under the Key Roles and NOS can be found in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, and in Appendices 1 and 5.

Preparing Records for the Practice Assessment Report

The student should submit all their final Records of (critical) practice to the practice teacher one week prior to the end of the placement for inclusion in the PAR. If a student fails to provide the practice teacher with their Records of (critical) practice, then PAR submission and a student's result status will be delayed, and they will not be able to progress further in the programme. If extra Records of (critical) practice are submitted, the

University reserves the right to remove additional material where it is inappropriate or irrelevant.

Group Care and Community Development requirements

There are two themed Records of Practice that are required to be completed over the Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO). Students at Stage 2 are required to complete one of the following during their PLO:

- Group Care
- Community Development

They can however, complete both on the first PLO if the opportunities are available to do so or complete the outstanding Record in the final PLO. It will depend on the opportunities available, and students should explore this at their initial practice learning agreement meeting. There are specific themed Records of Practice for students to use to meet the requirements of Group Care and Community Development. Further information is available in the OU module website for NI K216 and K315 students.

3.4.2 Direct observations

The objective of the direct observation is to provide evidence of the student's ability to meet some elements of the key roles. It should also provide evidence that the student's practice is consistent with the NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice. Discussing the direct observations in supervision support the student's learning and highlights the student's future practice learning needs. The direct observation and the practice teacher's feedback constitute written evidence which should be supplied as part of the PAR.

How many are needed?

Please read the following guidance carefully, as there are different arrangements for K216 and K315. Both K216 and K315 require at least three direct observations.

- At least two (for K216) or three (for K315) of these direct observations must be completed by the practice teacher.
- For both K216 and K315, one of the direct observations may be completed by the on-site supervisor if they are a qualified social worker and selected by the practice teacher to do so.
- At least two (for K216) or three (for K315) of the direct observations must include interactions with a service user.
- At least two (for K216) or three (for K315) of the direct observations should include service user or carer feedback. In planning the observation, the student should discuss with the practice teacher what method will be used to collect this feedback. If service user feedback is not available, the student should reflect on this and briefly explain why on the proforma.
- For both K216 and K315, one direct observation may be carried out without service users being present; for example, a student presenting a report to an agency panel or a presentation to a formal meeting. In this case, the observer should seek feedback from one or more other professionals present. The proforma includes a separate section to record this.

What should be included?

The direct observation form includes guidance for approaching the task. *Hard-copy signatures* of the student and the observer must be on the form.

Planning the direct observation

The 'planning' section of the form should be completed in advance of the observation. Direct observations can be a time of great anxiety for students, but taking time to set up and plan the observations carefully with the practice teacher can alleviate some of this anxiety. It is particularly important to ensure that the purpose of each session is clear and has been agreed by both student and practice teacher. The clearest way to do this is to agree in advance (ideally in writing) the following factors:

- How, where and when each of the observations will take place.
- The expected duration of the observation session, including any pre-meeting and feedback time, what the observer will be observing and what evidence is required to demonstrate or satisfy the Key Roles and NOS.
- How feedback will be collected from the service user(s) (if appropriate to the context) and how it will be used.
- How the practice teacher will record the content of the session and use this both for feedback and for the purposes of the Practice Assessment Report.
- How issues covered by the Standards of Conduct and Practice will be addressed. This will apply to the student's work with the service users but is also relevant to the conduct of the observation and the relationship between the student and the practice teacher.

Students will need to get clear permission from the service user and/or other participants (written, if possible) that the observation can take place. If a video is being made, the service user should be informed that it is only for the purposes of the practice teacher assessing the student, and that it will be destroyed once the assessment process is complete.

The practice teacher and the student will need to give some thought to seating arrangements and the layout of the room where the observation takes place. It is helpful if the room is set out so that the practice teacher is able to see the student but is out of the direct eyeline of the service user.

Assessment needs to take into account that the student and the service user may be feeling anxious about the observation. However, the student should still be able to demonstrate reasonable competence under these conditions.

Additional NIDSWP Regional Requirements for Direct Observations

Normally all three direct observations must involve face-to-face contact with service user (s) and/or carer(s). It is desirable that all direct observations are live but a minimum of two MUST be. As non-verbal contact is an essential component of interactions it is only in exceptional circumstances, and where the nature of the work is predominantly by telephone contact, that one of the three observations can be of a verbal interaction. Additional opportunities would have to be provided to enable the student to have face-to-face contact for the other two observations.

Observations should ideally be 'staggered' throughout the PLO, i.e. beginning/middle/end phase of the PLO.

All three direct observations must be carried out by an accredited practice teacher/ practice teacher award candidate.

Note, in exceptional circumstances, where as a result of COVID-19, three face-to-face direct observations are not possible, please refer to the 'Addendum Covid Specific Guidance' (Dec 2022: NIDSWP Website).

Direct observations: obtaining feedback from the service user or carer

All except one direct observation **must** include service user or carer feedback, and guidance about this is included on the direct observation proforma. Careful consideration should be given to how feedback will be obtained from the service user or carer. As soon as possible after the observation, the practice teacher should have a discussion with the service user or carer to obtain and record their view of the student's performance on this occasion (based on the questions provided on the proforma). The practice teacher should complete the relevant section of the direct observation proforma, using the service user's or carer's own words where possible. Students are encouraged to design their own tools for obtaining service user and carer feedback across the placement as a whole, and these may also be used after the direct observation. In this case, the practice teacher should transfer the relevant information and /or quotes onto the direct observation proforma. See Section 3.4.4 for further advice on obtaining feedback. The practice teacher is expected to refer to the direct observation feedback in the PAR, and so may find it helpful to link this with one or more of the Key Roles and NOS.

If service user feedback after the direct observation is not available, the student should indicate the reasons on the proforma.

Practice teacher feedback

Immediately after the observation, in private, and with regard to the confidentiality of the service user, the practice teacher should provide verbal feedback to the student. The practice teacher must also provide written feedback to the student within five working days of the direct observation taking place, with time allowed for further discussion. Feedback to the student must be clear and honest; if the student is not meeting requirements, the practice teacher should say so and give concrete examples to show how this can be achieved in future sessions.

The practice teacher is asked to provide, via the proforma, an evaluative comment on how the direct observation provides evidence of the student's strengths and areas for development in relation to relevant Key Roles and NOS. Further advice about assessing under the Key Roles and NOS can be found in the Introduction and Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of this guide and in Appendices 1 and 5.

Student's reflection

After the student has considered the feedback provided by the service user or carer and the practice teacher, they should write brief reflective comments, including the key learning points they plan to take forward.

Preparing direct observation proformas for the Practice Assessment Report

It is unlikely that any one of the direct observations will provide evidence of all the Key Roles and NOS. However, care should be taken by the practice teacher and the student to select direct observations which will evidence the broadest possible range of Key Roles and NOS.

3.4.3 Confidentiality

Students must ensure that the content of their written work is presented in a manner which ensures confidentiality for service users and carers, and other members of staff. This is in line with section 7.2 of the Northern Ireland Social Care Councils standards of conduct for Social Work students. Students have to complete a proforma in relation to obtaining service users consent and ensuring confidentiality in relation to any work that student wishes to use for their learning purposes. See DHSSPS Circular (Consent in Social Care, July 2004). This is available from the Social Work Agency website.

The real name and identity of a service user or carer and any staff member should always be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms and students should clearly state that pseudonyms have been used in their Records of (critical) practice. As a guide for students to consider when writing their Records of practice, the issues identified in Figure 2 indicate some of the other factors that may be taken into consideration.

Students will need to make a professional judgement as to what information can be shared. Any one issue should not normally identify a person or situation; however, students should be careful if they include a number of issues which might lead to the service user in question being identified. Students should remember some individual issues may need to be discussed to show how they are addressing difference, for example gender or type of location.

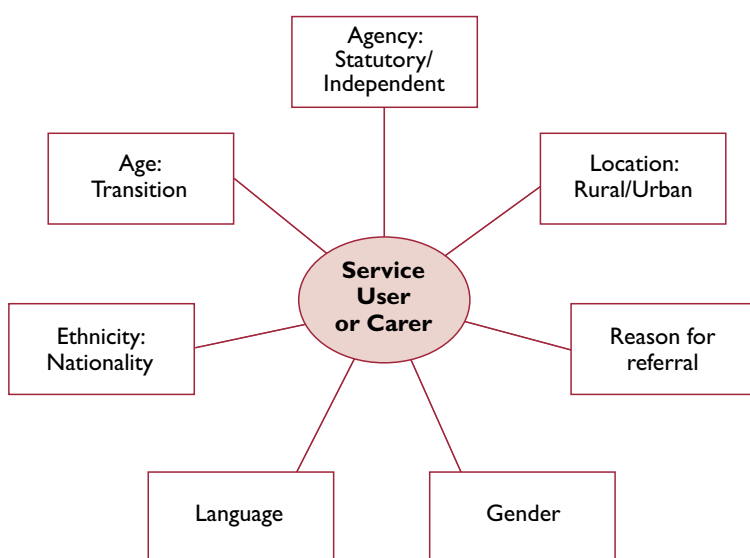


Figure 2 Factors to consider relating to confidentiality

3.4.4 Feedback from service users and carers

Students should be aware of the regulatory Statements of Expectations from those who use services and carers. To be competent against the Standards contained in the

Framework Specification, social work students must demonstrate that they meet these expectations in their practice (refer to Appendix 2 in **Social Work Handbook**).

Throughout the placement, the student is expected to seek meaningful, first-hand feedback about different aspects of their work from service users and carers. Seeking feedback should not be confined to the direct observations (although it is an essential part of them – see above). Additional opportunities should be sought, if at all possible, and discussed in supervision. Students are encouraged to design their own tools and methods for obtaining feedback, taking into account the following considerations:

- Different methods of gaining feedback will need to be planned according to the nature of the student's involvement with, and the needs of, particular service users. For example, not all service users will be able to provide written feedback, so other methods of asking and recording their views will need to be developed.
- Some service users and carers may need support in providing their feedback.
- Consider how to overcome factors (including the practice context) which might inhibit or be barriers to the process of gathering feedback, such as the service user's age (if they are a child), communication difficulties and language barriers.
- When planning and reflecting on feedback, think about the implications of timing and different approaches.
- Be mindful of the implications for the student's learning when it is necessary to gather feedback via a third party. Try to make sure that the voice of the service user is represented as accurately as possible.
- Some service users may not have chosen to have a social work intervention, but they can still be asked about the quality of the service provided by the student.

The student should reflect on service user and carer feedback with their practice teacher and use it to develop their practice learning. Where it is not possible or appropriate to seek feedback, the implications for learning should be discussed in supervision. The Record of (critical) practice (service user/carer feedback) should be used to reflect on the process of seeking and obtaining this feedback.

Practice teachers are expected to refer to service user and carer feedback as a source of evidence throughout the Practice Assessment Report.

Further information on recent guidance developed by NIDSWP on involving service users can be found in Appendix 7.

3.4.5 Use of recorded sessions with service users

After consultation with the practice teacher or the on-site supervisor, and with the written permission of a service user, a student may record (audio or visual) their interactions with that service user. Agency guidelines in respect of recorded sessions must be followed. The written permission and electronic recording should be provided to the practice teacher by the student to evidence relevant aspects of the Key Roles and NOS. The student must explain the context and purposes of the recording to the service user and must not use the recording for any other purposes.

3.4.6 Process recording

A student may supply to the practice teacher a copy of a 'process recording'. Unlike a Record of (critical) practice, a 'process recording' can be as long or as short as the student wishes. Typically, process recordings are longer than 1000 words.

A process recording should be a verbatim ('word-for-word') recollection of an interaction between the student and a service user (or service users), written by the student. The student should prepare for process recording by concentrating on the service user's verbal and non-verbal behaviour throughout the interaction. Process recording should facilitate the student's critical reflection on their skills, attitudes, values and use of self in social work practice. It may be useful to the practice teacher in collating evidence and may later be summarised and turned into a Record of (critical) practice.

3.4.7 Supervision records as evidence

Supervision records are a useful source of evidence which can be referred to in the Practice Assessment Report. In the event of a queried PAR, the Practice Assessment Panel may decide to ask for a copy of supervision notes.

Various aspects of supervision are discussed elsewhere in this practice learning guide (see Sections 1.3, 1.4 and 2.8). The practice teacher should keep their own record of supervision discussions. In addition to recording evidence of progress towards the Key Roles and NOS, it is also important to record any concerns raised by the practice teacher or the student, and the agreed actions to address these.

3.4.8 On-site supervisor feedback and feedback from colleagues

The practice teacher should seek feedback regarding the student's performance from the on-site supervisor and from the student's workplace colleagues. This should also include feedback from other professionals outside the workplace who have worked with the same service users as the student: for example, teachers or medical and health professionals. The on-site supervisor's comments are yet another means by which the practice teacher can gather evidence that the student has met the Key Roles and NOS. The same applies to feedback from other professionals.

Where a direct observation has been carried out of the student's performance in a meeting or similar intervention in which service users/ carers were not included, the observer should seek feedback from one or more other professionals present. Please refer to the guidance in section 3.4.2.

3.4.9 Reports, letters and recordings produced by the student

The student should provide the practice teacher with any reports, letters and recordings which the student has produced on an agreed and regular basis. It is important that the practice teacher can assert on the basis of this information that the student has (a) made appropriate written communications, and (b) made consistent, coherent and concise recordings of activities related to service delivery.

3.4.10 Line manager's endorsement

The practice teacher should ensure that their assessment of the students' competence at Stage 3 includes an operational line manager's endorsement of the student's practice as required under the regulatory Practice Learning Standards. This is available on the Social Work Agency website.

3.5 Reviewing process and quality assurance

In NI, placement provision is approved and regulated by the NI Degree in Social Work Partnership and NISCC, to ensure all practice learning opportunities are suitable and can meet the requirements under the Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work. The OU also undertake quality assurance of placements through feedback and evaluations from students and practice teachers and review of students' progress and learning opportunities while on placement. The practice tutor has a key role in quality assuring placements on behalf of the OU staff tutor. In addition, the module team takes an overview of quality at the interim assessment meeting and conclusion of practice learning. A copy of the interim assessment meeting minutes are returned to the module team so that it can be reassured (on behalf of the Practice Assessment Panel) that any issues are being identified and resolved in a timely way. Submission of this record supports the Practice Assessment Panel's quality assurance function.

At the end of the placement, the student is responsible for sending the final copy of the PAR to their practice tutor, who verifies the report and checks that it is complete. To promote consistency and fairness, all completed and verified PARs are considered by an independent reviewer who reads the report to ensure that the recommendations are supported by the evidence. The reviewer may contact the practice teacher or the student for further clarification if needed.

A sample of PARs, along with feedback from the reviewing process, is submitted to the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) for quality assurance purposes. The PAP has the following functions:

- to quality assure the assessment of practice learning
- to advise on the practice assessment of individual students by reviewing fails, queries and a sample of 'pass' PARS
- to make recommendations to the Cluster Examinations and Assessment Board (CEAB) via the Module Results Panel.

The PAP is chaired by an agency representative who is independent of the University. The membership includes representatives from the module team, academic staff, service user and carer representatives, an employer, a practice tutor and a practice teacher.

The PAP meeting also considers any unresolved questions, issues raised by the reports and broader issues of quality to report to the Module Results Panel.

The PAP always looks at PARs where a fail has been recommended by a practice teacher. The panel also considers PARs where the reviewing process has highlighted concerns that the evidence, which has been submitted with the report, may be insufficient to support the recommendation.

If your report is being sent to the PAP, you will be sent a summary of the concerns raised during the review process. You will be invited to comment on this in relation to the evidence contained within your PAR. No new evidence can be submitted in your response. In exceptional circumstances, where the PAP considers that the practice teacher's recommendation is not supported by the evidence, the PAP may recommend that the Module Results Panel and the CEAB should overturn the practice teacher's recommendation.

The final decision about each PAR is made by the CEAB. Students do not have the right to appeal against the academic judgement of the Board, however, there are certain circumstances where an appeal may be possible on other grounds. Further information is available from the OU Student Help Centre or the OU 'Complaints and appeals' webpage at <http://www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/topic/policies-and-complaints>.

4 Guidance notes for K216/K315 placement documentation and processes

The proformas that collect information regarding practice learning are straightforward to follow and each form has detailed guidance notes. Consequently, this section just gives a brief overview of the forms and their purpose and highlights a number of key messages. You may also find the ‘**Quick reference guide**’ on the back cover helpful.

Additional NIDSWP Regional Guidance on placement meetings

PLO meetings can be virtual or F2F if requested by any party. F2F is also a requirement if the student is a returning student from a fail/incomplete PLO.

Please note that The Open University requires that at least one placement meeting should be face to face.

E-portfolio for K216

Please note that the University is in the final stages of the creation of an e-portfolio for K216. This will mean that all relevant paperwork, such as the forms discussed below, will be kept electronically. More guidance on using this platform will be issued separately and prior to placement commencing in January 2024. This e-portfolio applies only to K216.

4.1 Assessed practice information form – SWD3NI

This form collects essential administrative information about the placement. The student is responsible for completing Part A of the form and for ensuring that their practice teacher completes and signs part B and the on-site supervisor if applicable. The OU uses this form to collect accurate details about practice teachers’ qualifications, experience and professional registration, and ensure that these meet the requirements outlined in Section 1.8. The student is responsible for emailing the completed form to: WELS-SW-Practice@open.ac.uk by the end of February 2024. Late forms may delay the student’s progress for administrative reasons.

4.2 The Practice Learning Initial Agreement – SWD4NI

The Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) is a record of the discussion at the Practice Learning Agreement meeting. The PLA form includes notes about completion, but some key points about the meeting are emphasised here.

The PLA meeting should preferably take place before the start of practice learning and in any event no later than 10 working days after the placement begins.

The PLA form must be signed by all members of the practice learning team as evidence that an agreement has been reached.

The student is responsible for distributing the signed PLA to all parties within 10 working days of the agreement being reached.

Failure to meet these timescales may result in the suspension of practice learning. The practice teacher should append a copy of the PLA to the Practice Assessment Report when it is submitted to The Open University.

The PLA meeting should discuss and record the agreed arrangements in respect of all areas noted on the PLA form. Immediate problems and their agreed resolution should be clearly noted. In some circumstances the practice tutor may wish to seek advice from the staff tutor and/or the module team chair to determine whether further action is necessary. The PLA meeting should consider in principle how possible disruptions and difficulties will be addressed. In this sense, the PLA sets out a framework in which the majority of problems can be promptly addressed through regular communication among members of the practice learning team, and through the practice tutor's support for the student and the practice teacher. The practice learning team should also familiarise itself with Section 5 of this guidance, which provides advice on more serious difficulties which may cause disruption to practice learning.

The meetings should also discuss the arrangements for an induction period (even if the PLO is based in the student's own workplace).

Additional learning needs, which apply to academic study as well as the placement, should be explored – please see section below.

The PLA meeting provides an opportunity to clarify the purpose of Records of (critical) practice, Records of (critical) practice (service user/carer feedback) and direct observations; that is, how they might be used to support the student's professional development and provide evidence of the student's proficiency at the relevant level of the Key Roles and NOS. There is further guidance in Section 3 and the practice tutor will be able to advise during the placement.

The PLA meeting is also an opportunity for the student to formally confirm that no new issues have arisen which might impact on their Fitness to Practise (Section 1.2), although this does not replace the student's ongoing responsibility to inform the OU of any such issues at the earliest opportunity. If they have any uncertainties about being able to confirm this, students should initially seek advice from the agency coordinator and/or the practice tutor. Further information about Fitness to Practise can be found in the Handbook.

Students who have a disability or an additional requirement

If the student has any specific requirements arising from a disability or health condition, or from other needs such as dyslexia, these should be discussed and recorded on the PLA form. The student may be experienced in managing an existing health condition in their usual place of work, but support should still be explored when moving into the placement context.

Students should consult their sponsor to discuss options for reasonable adjustments to be provided in the placement agency. If the student has already been assessed for reasonable adjustments in their own workplace, they will need to approach their employer for a new assessment specific to the placement. Further to this, students will complete a 'student profile' with a practice tutor in September prior to the placement starting. This form will capture information on any disability or additional requirements.

The PLA meeting may also wish to consider whether a student with specific additional requirements should apply for a Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) or have their requirements reviewed in the light of the online module materials.

Students with a disability or an additional requirement can obtain information on the support and services available by visiting 'Disabled student support' via StudentHome or at <https://help.open.ac.uk/topic/disability>, or by contacting their Student Support Team for individual advice and guidance.

Please note that applying for (and obtaining) support – either via the OU or from the employer – can take several months and therefore students are advised to explore options well in advance of the module start date. Students should be aware of the NIDSWP guidance on ‘Supporting Disabled Social Work Students undertaking PLO’ <https://nidswp.net/documents/>

4.3 Student concerns about the placement – SWD16NI

In the majority of cases, this form will not be needed. Day-to-day problems can usually be resolved between the practice teacher, the on-site supervisor and the student. Nevertheless, students should be made aware of this form and its purpose at the Practice Learning Agreement meeting.

4.4 The interim assessment meeting – SWD11NI

The interim assessment meeting is an interim assessment of the student’s progress. It is a means of formally checking whether the student is ‘on track’ to meet the relevant level of the Key Roles and NOS by the end of the placement. Practice teachers, in consultation with the student, should prepare in advance for the review meeting. Practice teachers will need to exercise their judgement about how successfully the various key roles are being met at this point, taking into account the evidence to date. Guidance may also be sought from the practice tutor. All parties should see the interim assessment form in advance of the meeting.

The interim assessment proforma is a record of the discussion at the interim assessment meeting. The form includes notes about completion, but some key points about the meeting are emphasised below.

The meeting occurs as near as possible to the 43rd day of the K216 placement and the 50th day of the K315 placement. However, if necessary, this review meeting can be held earlier, for example if there are concerns about the placement or the students’ progress. To prepare for this meeting, the practice teacher and student should discuss the student’s progress and draft the relevant sections of the interim assessment form in advance of the meeting. Please see further guidance on the form itself.

The practice tutor chairs the interim assessment meeting, using the relevant form to guide the agenda and to record decisions and plans. The practice tutor ensures that all sections are completed, and that the action plan addresses learning needs for the remaining days of the placement. The form should be signed by all parties at the meeting. If there is any dissent regarding the interim assessment and/or its action plan, this should be recorded by the practice tutor on the form. The form must be submitted to the K216 or K315 curriculum manager within five working days of the date of the interim assessment meeting. The practice teacher should append a copy of the interim assessment form to the PAR when it is submitted to The Open University.

It is very likely that the interim assessment will identify areas in which the student has yet to make progress towards meeting the Key Roles and NOS. The meeting should record specific areas for improvement that must be achieved, and clarify what further evidence is needed. This is especially important where it is identified that a student is not clearly on course to pass the placement.

The interim assessment provides an opportunity to ensure that if additional requirements or adjustments (in response to a disability or health condition) were identified in the PLA (Section 4.3), these are working satisfactorily.

It is also important to discuss and record any new information or concerns about Fitness to Practise (Section 1.2 and 5.6). Any concerns or issues must be clearly explained on the proforma, with a clear record of how they will be addressed in the remaining part of the placement.

While there may be indications during this period that a student is struggling to meet the key roles required, a recommendation to either pass or fail the student may only be made at the conclusion of the placement via the PAR.

4.5 The End of Practice Learning Review – SWD14NI

The End of Practice Learning Review (EPLR) should be arranged to take place within 10 working days of the end of the placement.

The proforma should be completed by the practice tutor at the EPLR meeting and should be signed by members of the practice learning team and any other parties at that meeting. The practice teacher should append a copy of the End of Practice Learning Review to the Practice Assessment Report. The SWD14NI proforma should be kept by all parties and presented by the student to the PLA meeting of any subsequent placement. It may also be helpful to share the proforma with the agency coordinator (via the staff tutor) if it contains important information for the student's next placement or first year in practice.

On the successful completion of K315, the SWD14NI forms the basis of the student transcript which each student is required to have on conclusion of their social work training. To complete the transcript, the student will meet with the practice tutor and attach a copy of their Degree Supplement, which provides details of academic achievement, to the SWD14NI and make it available to their employer. The OU will send out the Degree Supplement after the results have been released.

For K216, this meeting offers an opportunity to identify general strengths and weaknesses of the student's performance in relation to the student's future practice learning needs.

For K315, where a pass is recommended, this meeting is an opportunity to confirm the student's performance and to identify the learning experience needed during the first year of practice as a newly qualified social worker.

The EPLR meeting should still take place even if it is clear that the practice teacher intends to recommend a fail. It is important that all members of the practice learning team are able to discuss the reasons for this potential outcome. This should help clarify the student's learning needs for a future placement.

Upon graduating, newly qualified social workers have to undertake an 'Assessed Year in Employment' (AYE) and graduates should approach their employer to commence this. When you complete your social work degree you are registered with NISCC on the social work part of the register but with a condition of successful completion of the AYE. This means therefore that you are not a fully registered social worker until the AYE is successfully completed.

4.6 The Practice Assessment Report – SWD5NI

The PAR form includes notes about completion, but some key points about the process are emphasised below.

The purpose of the PAR is to record the practice teacher's assessment of whether the student has achieved the required level of the Key Roles and NOS in their practice. It is important to support all judgements with clearly referenced evidence – please see further guidance on the form (and section 3.4 of this guide). The practice teacher then makes a recommendation of pass or fail to the Practice Assessment Panel. Students must pass

the practice learning component to achieve a pass for the K216 or K315 module. The module result is formally decided by the K216 or K315 Module Results Panel and then ratified by the Cluster Examinations and Assessment Board.

Section 1 of the PAR provides details about the student, the placement and a summary of work undertaken, as well as the practice teacher's recommendation of pass or fail. It is important to provide details about any unforeseen circumstances that impacted on the student's learning. If this resulted in additional practice learning meetings or action plans, these should be appended to the PAR.

In Section 2 of the PAR, the practice teacher should provide an assessment of the student's overall competence across all 6 Key Roles and the NOS (see Appendix 1). Some practice teachers find it helpful to complete Section 3 first, but the assessment of the student's strengths and weaknesses will need to be informed by detailed consideration of the Key Roles and NOS.

This section should highlight skills and qualities that the student has demonstrated in meeting the Key Roles and NOS, cross-referenced with specific examples of supporting evidence. Areas for further development should also be included. Please note that as long as these points are addressed, it is not necessary to write to the 1500 (maximum) word allowance. Please refer to statements of differentials in Appendix 2.

If the practice teacher recommends a fail, an assessment of the student's progress overall is required. It is helpful if the practice teacher describes the opportunities which were arranged to facilitate the student to demonstrate performance (this may, if relevant, relate to specific key roles or areas of concern). There should also be a description of the student's progress and performance, explaining which Key Roles and NOS that they failed to meet the level required.

Section 3 of the PAR must be completed for all students even if the practice teacher recommends a pass. This section should clearly state whether or not the student has demonstrated competence within each of the Key Roles and NOS.

The evidence sources for this assessment should also be stated. Service user and carer feedback should be used as a source of evidence throughout the PAR. One obvious source will be the service user feedback sections of the direct observation proforma, but practice teachers are encouraged to refer to additional evidence obtained across the placement (see Section 3 of this guide).

Where the recommendation is for the student to pass, it may not be necessary to add a great deal of additional detail in Section 3. However, there is the opportunity for the practice teacher to highlight a student's strengths, progress or areas for further development in a particular Key Role.

4.7 Evaluation of the placement – SWD17NI/SWD18NI

Students and practice teachers are required to complete an evaluation questionnaire which needs to be submitted electronically. This makes an important contribution to OU quality assurance. The evaluation questionnaire can be found on the module and agency websites.

The evaluation should be submitted at the same time as the Practice Assessment Report (PAR) to WELS-SW-Practice@open.ac.uk. Both the student and the practice teacher should sign the statement on the PAR which confirms they have done this. If there are exceptional difficulties with an electronic submission, the evaluation can be sent as a hard copy with the PAR (in a sealed envelope if preferred). The PAR will not be considered complete until the evaluation has been received, and failure to submit it may delay the student's progression. However, the information provided in the evaluation does not form

any part of the student's assessment. While evaluations are collected with the PAR, the process for analysing the data is handled completely separately.

5 Managing difficulties in a placement

Most placements go relatively smoothly. However, at the initial PLA meeting (Section 4.3) it is important that the practice learning team considers in principle how possible disruptions and difficulties will be addressed.

5.1 Process for dealing with different kinds of problems

Day-to-day problems should be resolved informally between the practice teacher, the on-site supervisor and the student. If further advice is needed, the practice tutor is there to support any member of the practice learning team and should be the first point of contact. Concerns about a student's progress or practice should normally be discussed at the interim assessment meeting (Section 4.5) and an action plan agreed.

Sometimes it may be necessary to seek additional advice from the staff tutor, module team and the agency coordinator. Early discussion can often lead to a resolution without any significant disruption to the student's practice learning.

If, however, there are serious concerns about the placement, or if serious concerns about the student's progress or practice arise before or after the interim review, it is important to immediately alert the practice tutor. In such circumstances the practice tutor is able to call an additional meeting of the practice learning team to discuss how the issue can be addressed (see below).

The sponsor is responsible for providing appropriate placements, and the agency coordinator must always be consulted about serious issues which have the potential to disrupt a student's practice learning arrangements. The staff tutor and the module team chair should also be consulted. **The final decision about the suitability or viability of a placement rests with the OU because it is accountable for the student's learning opportunities and the quality of the placement.**

Please note that the OU does not permit extensions to the placement. If there is a risk that disruption to the placement may result in the student being unable to complete it within the usual timescale, please refer to the guidance that follows.

Additional placement meetings and action plans

There are a range of circumstances which have the potential to disrupt practice learning. Examples (not exhaustive) include:

- unforeseen personal circumstances affecting the student (Section 5.2)
- absence of the practice teacher (Section 5.3)
- unresolved conflict of interest (Section 5.4)
- changes to agency provision or the Practice Learning Arrangements, including departures from the practice learning agreement or collaboration agreement (Section 5.5)
- concerns about the student's Fitness to Practise (Section 5.6)
- other serious issues impacting on the progress of the placement or the student.

There is a common process for addressing all of the above: that is, the issue should be discussed with the practice tutor at the earliest opportunity, following which it may be necessary to arrange an additional meeting with all members of the practice learning

team. The purpose of the meeting should be to clarify what has happened and to seek a resolution.

It is very important to have a clear record of any additional meetings, including the reason for the concerns (with evidence if appropriate) and the specific actions which have been agreed.

The practice tutor is responsible for taking and circulating notes of the meeting (preferably using the template provided on the 'Tutor resources' area of the module website to ensure that all areas have been addressed). These notes will need to be attached to the PAR (and the interim assessment proforma if the additional meeting takes place before this). In the event that the placement ends prematurely, notes of all meetings will also be required for the Practice Assessment Panel.

5.2 Disruption of practice learning due to student's absence or personal circumstances

Students may be absent from a placement through no fault of their own: for example, because of illness, family difficulties, unexpected caring responsibilities or bereavement. If a student is absent from the placement for 10 days or fewer, the replacement time may be made up at the end of it. The practice tutor should be notified of the rescheduled completion date.

When a student is – or appears likely to be – absent for more than 10 days from the placement, an early meeting should be held with the practice tutor, the student and the practice teacher to establish whether it will be possible for the placement to be completed and the PAR to be submitted by the deadline. If so, the practice learning team should identify strategies for managing the remainder of the placement.

This might include reconsidering the learning opportunities which can be made available and reviewing the student's planned workload.

Aside from absence, there may be other circumstances in which a student's placement is seriously disrupted for reasons beyond their control (excluding uncertainties about the student's ability to meet the Key Roles and NOS or Fitness to Practise requirements). This should be explored in an additional meeting. If the meeting has clear evidence that the student's learning has been significantly disrupted, it may be possible to adjust the placement end date to ensure the number of PLO days can be completed. As this may have implications for (a) whether or not the student can complete the placement within the required timescale, and (b) agency resources, this course of action requires agreement from the sponsor and the module team chair. If this is being considered, the practice tutor will need to seek advice from the staff tutor, as this may require agreement from the sponsor and the NIDSWP for stage 3 PLO.

If the interruption to the placement means that submission of the completed PAR would be delayed, the practice tutor should consult their staff tutor. The staff tutor and the module team chair will confirm whether or not the delay can be accommodated within the University's permitted timeframe.

Please note that the student will still need to submit their EMA on time as extensions to this are not permitted (see Section 3 of the Assessment Handbook, available via StudentHome).

In some cases, it may not be possible for the student to complete the placement within the permitted timeframe. It may also be that, due to personal circumstances, it is not advisable for the student to resume the placement at this point. If there is any doubt or disagreement about whether the student should continue with their placement, the

practice tutor should consult their staff tutor. The final decision rests with the University, following consultation with the practice learning team.

In order to meet NISCC requirements a student must complete 85/100 days PLO as appropriate. **Therefore any absences from PLO must be 'replaced'**. A record of absences should be maintained, and written agreement should be reached as to how any missed days/hours will be made up.

In the case of 'missed days' due to illness/urgent and unavoidable circumstances the following will normally apply:

Up to and including 5 missed days:

The student **must** make up these days/hours as agreed with practice teacher. Study days cannot be used to make up absences.

6-10 missed days:

The student must make up these days/hours as agreed with practice teacher, tutor and on-site supervisor. This is likely to involve negotiation of an extension to the practice learning period. Any renegotiation of the end date of the PLO will depend on the needs of the PLO provider, the needs of service users and the services delivered.

More than 10 missed days:

PLO would normally be discontinued. Any exception to this must be reported to the Professional Officer, NIDSWP including the reason upon which the decision is based.

In arriving at a decision to continue or discontinue a PLO the university (practice tutor and staff tutor) will need to consider the individual circumstances of each student, in consultation with the Practice Learning Co-ordinator and/or senior manager as appropriate. It may be necessary to renegotiate the end date of the PLO period. Any renegotiation will be dependent on the needs of the PLO provider and service users.

If a student's competence and development is considered to be marginal no extension will be made to the PLO, i.e. no additional days will be given, to allow the student opportunity to bring their performance up to the required standard.

If it is necessary for the student to withdraw from the module, the practice teacher must write a brief report on the student's progress in relation to the Key Roles and NOS and the student's future learning needs, which the student can then take to the next placement. The student will need to seek agreement from their sponsoring employer, NIDSWP (for stage 3 PLO) and the funder (such as the Department of Health) to re-register for the module the following year.

5.3 Practice teacher's absence

If the practice teacher is ill, or absent for other reasons, for more than 10 days during the placement, the provider agency should supply a substitute practice teacher. It may be necessary to temporarily suspend the placement for a short time while new arrangements are made. It would not be appropriate for the student to continue their practice learning for any length of time without either a practice teacher or on-site supervisor in place.

The practice tutor should always be notified of the practice teacher's anticipated or actual absence of 10 days or more; and be notified immediately of any change in practice teacher.

It is the Designated Practice Learning Provider (DPLP) responsibility to ensure that the student is provided with an appropriate placement which meets their learning needs, including the provision of adequate supervision. If they cannot meet this obligation, the staff tutor should be notified immediately. The staff tutor may, in certain circumstances, be able to provide additional support to enable the placement to continue and the student to

progress. The staff tutor will liaise with the agency coordinator to put in place plans to ensure the student is not disadvantaged in these circumstances.

5.4 Addressing conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is a past or present relationship between any members of the practice learning team, which has the potential to affect the impartiality or fairness of the learning opportunities and assessment.

Examples (not exhaustive) include:

- previous long-standing friendships
- previous business partnerships
- a history of acrimonious disputes
- marriage, kinship, or a previous relationship, whether of a long- or short-term nature
- if the student or a close relative is or has been a service user in relation to a member of the practice learning team
- if the student occupies other roles within the agency which might overlap with their student role
- any other perceived or potential conflict of interest.

The Open University Social Work Degree programme does not allow the practice teacher to be:

- the line manager from the student's sponsoring agency (or any other agency in which the student works)
- the owner, director or chief executive of, or anyone holding a similar type of role within, the sponsoring agency.

Occasionally, in very small agencies, staff occupy several different roles simultaneously. Because of the potential for a conflict of interest, this should always be discussed in the Practice Learning Agreement meeting.

The PLA meeting should clarify the nature of any apparent conflict of interest. In many instances, the practice tutor will be able to work with other members of the practice learning team to develop an action plan to minimise the effects. However, it is the practice tutor's responsibility, in consultation with the staff tutor and the module team chair, to decide whether the conflict of interest is surmountable or insurmountable.

If it is decided that the conflict of interest is insurmountable, it will be necessary to take immediate action which may involve a short temporary suspension of the placement. It may be necessary for one person to withdraw from the practice learning team, and be replaced by a different practice teacher, on-site supervisor or practice tutor. Alternatively, a whole new set of arrangements may be required. Radical changes will necessitate a new PLA.

All conflicts of interest, and the actions to be taken, should be recorded on the PLA form. The practice tutor should inform the agency coordinator of any identified conflict of interest. If a conflict of interest emerges after the PLA meeting, the practice tutor should immediately be made aware of the circumstances, and necessary actions taken (recorded and attached to the PLA form).

5.5 Changes to agency provision

Occasionally there may be significant changes or disruptions to the workplace which seriously affect the student's learning. Examples include:

- one or more parties to the Practice Learning Agreement are no longer meeting the requirements set out in that document
- significant conflicts of perspective might arise between the practice teacher and the student
- significant professional conflicts or disagreements could arise between other members of the workplace and affect the student's learning in some way
- other significant agency changes which seriously affect the student's learning.

Where the student's learning is seriously affected or disrupted in any of these circumstances, the practice tutor should be notified immediately and should take advice from their staff tutor. It is likely that an additional placement meeting will need to be arranged to clarify what has happened and seek a resolution (see Section 5.1). It may be necessary to temporarily suspend the placement for a short time until the situation has been addressed (Section 5.7). The module team chair should also be consulted. It will also be important to contact the agency coordinator and involve them in the resolution of serious concerns. However, the final decision about the suitability and continuation of the placement rests with the University.

5.6 Concerns about Fitness to Practise

In addition to meeting academic and professional standards, students are expected to conduct themselves – in both private and professional life – in accordance with the NI Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Student Social Workers. Students also have a responsibility to report any change in their circumstances to the NI Social Care Council, their practice learning team and/or relevant others (NISCC, 2010: Registration of Social Work Students on the Social Care Register).

This section clarifies the process to be followed when concerns arise on placement about a student's Fitness to Practise.

Examples of behaviours and issues which might give rise to concerns about the student's Fitness to Practise are outlined in the Open University Fitness to Practise procedure (available via a link on the module and Social Work Agency websites). In keeping with this guidance, a placement might be disrupted by any of the following Fitness to Practise issues:

- the practice teacher and/or their colleagues have concerns about the student's professional conduct, including significant departures from the NI Social Care Council regulations
- there are concerns about the student's unsafe practice which puts the health, safety or well-being of a service user at risk
- a complaint from a service user, a colleague, or a member of the public about the student's conduct or Fitness to Practise
- the student is made the subject of a formal disciplinary investigation in their agency, before or after the start of the placement, proven academic misconduct (plagiarism or collusion)
- the student becomes the subject of a formal investigation by a regulatory, safeguarding or similar body

- the student is convicted of a criminal offence; receives a conditional discharge for an offence; accepts a police caution; or becomes the subject of a police investigation
- concerns arise about serious, untreated or unacknowledged ill health which demonstrably affects the student's capacity to practise safely
- other potential concerns about Fitness to Practise, in relation to the NI Social Care Council requirements and/or the Open University's Fitness to Practise procedure.

In any of the above circumstances, it is the student's responsibility to inform their practice tutor immediately. The agency and the practice teacher should also share information when they become aware of potential Fitness to Practise concerns. The practice tutor will need to seek advice from their staff tutor. It may be necessary to hold an additional placement meeting to establish what has happened and clarify the actions that need to be followed. In all cases, for the OU to formally address the issue, detailed and specific written information will be needed about the student's conduct and/or professional practice, including (where applicable) an explanation of whether this might put service users at risk. The staff tutor will decide whether the issue needs to be referred for consideration under the Fitness to Practise procedure. It may be necessary to arrange a temporary suspension of the placement, without prejudice, while the issue is investigated (see Section 5.7).

In circumstances where the University's 'fitness for practise' procedures have been invoked it will be the academic institution's responsibility to provide the NI Social Care Council with the information that it judges to be pertinent to the student's behaviour/conduct and/or practice of concern.

The NI Social Care Council have a responsibility to investigate allegations of misconduct against registrants and to take action against those where misconduct has been proven. While the NI Social Care Council may choose to begin their own investigation at this point, they will normally await the outcome of the F/HEI procedures before determining whether they wish to conduct their own investigation.

Student's concerns about another person

The student should have been made aware of relevant agency and OU policies as part of their induction process. Where the student has concerns about the conduct of their on-site supervisor or another staff member, or if they feel bullied or harassed by them, they should discuss this with their practice teacher in the first instance. If the student is unable or unwilling to do this, or if the concern is about the practice teacher, they should contact their practice tutor immediately, who should discuss the student's concerns with the agency staff and their staff tutor. Further advice is given in the social work programme's whistleblowing policy which is available via the module and Social Work Agency websites. If the student is called as a witness or is involved as a third party in an agency's investigation, the University will work with the agency to ensure that the student is properly supported in dealing with any disruption to their learning.

Where the conduct of a practice teacher is under investigation, the agency providing the placement should arrange for the student to be given a different practice teacher, and an additional three-way meeting should be held to ensure that the aims of the placement continue to be met. Please also refer to Section 5.3.

5.7 Temporary suspension of practice learning

The suspension of practice learning should be a last resort because substantial disruption may not permit the student to complete the placement within appropriate timescales. It is important to be guided by the following principles:

- all other potential courses of action should be considered and/or attempted before a placement is suspended
- a suspension of placement should always be a temporary measure while a serious issue or problem is addressed
- if the issue relates to concerns about the student's conduct or practice, suspending a placement is not a disciplinary action, and should be 'without prejudice'
- provided the issue can be satisfactorily resolved, the placement should resume as soon as possible.

In the context of these principles, a suspension of the placement may be appropriate for any of the serious issues or problems outlined earlier in this section (not all of them are repeated here).

If a concern has arisen about the student's Fitness to Practise (including formal disciplinary proceedings by the student's employer; or a criminal investigation by the police or other investigating authority), a decision should be made as to whether the matter is serious enough for the placement to be suspended while the issue is investigated.

If suspension of a placement is being considered for any reason, the practice tutor should set up a meeting of the practice learning team. Please note the following:

- It is essential that the practice tutor takes notes of the meeting, recording the reason for the suspension and the actions which have been agreed to resolve the issue.
- The notes should also record whether or not the student has declared a physical or mental health issue, and whether any reasonable adjustments are in place or have been considered.
- If the meeting is called to discuss the student's practice or conduct, the notes should also record the evidence for these concerns and the student's response. Please see Section 5.6 for further guidance on how concerns about conduct or Fitness to Practise should be addressed.
- The notes should record the end date of the suspension or, if this is unknown, a review date should be set.

A notes template is available in the 'Tutor resources' area of the module website for practice tutors to use, to ensure that all areas are covered. In exceptional and emergency circumstances, an employer, a sponsor or a placement provider may temporarily suspend a student's placement while a concern is investigated or an issue is resolved. As soon as practicable, the practice tutor must be informed and an additional placement meeting should be held to clarify the reasons for the suspension. As discussed above, an action plan should be in place to address the issue. Practice learning may resume if the issue is resolved, provided there is sufficient time left available for completion of the placement. The process below should be followed if a decision is made for a student to return to the placement:

- The practice tutor should convene a meeting of the practice learning team at the earliest opportunity, in order to avoid further delay.

- Consideration should be given to any additional informal meetings that may need to be arranged prior to the practice learning meeting: for example, to address relationship difficulties between any members of the practice learning team.
- The practice learning team should be provided with any relevant documentation prior to the meeting: for example, recommendations from a disciplinary or other investigation.
- If suspension was due to a disciplinary or professional conduct issue, the student should write a reflective account of the incident which describes what happened and the learning arising from this. This will aid any necessary revision of the practice learning needs.
- At the meeting, the practice learning team must address and revise any student learning needs, work opportunities and support needs arising from the suspension. Outcomes of the meeting must be recorded by the practice tutor in a brief report and circulated to the practice learning team for approval. Depending on the timing of the meeting, and the extent of the changes, it may be appropriate to record the process on a second PLA or interim assessment meeting proforma.
- The record of the practice learning team's meeting must be included with the PAR documentation.

5.8 Terminating a placement

It is a University expectation that a placement should not be terminated until every alternative has been fully explored, including – if appropriate – an attempt to resolve the issue via a documented action plan.

The grounds for termination of a placement include:

- an irretrievable breakdown in trust between the student and the sponsoring agency
- the agency cannot continue to meet its responsibilities to the student because of unforeseen circumstances
- all possible alternatives have been fully explored or attempted, but there is nevertheless an unresolvable disruption to practice learning
- exceptionally, the student's judgement is thought to be seriously impaired because of illness or bereavement.

Where concerns relate to the student's conduct or professional practice, the placement will normally need to be temporarily suspended (rather than terminated) while The Open University investigates the issue under its Fitness to Practise procedure (available on the 'Practice management' page on the module and Social Work Agency websites).

In other cases, the procedures below should be followed where it is proposed to terminate a placement:

- The practice tutor, acting in consultation with the staff tutor, should consult as widely as is thought necessary, and certainly with the student, the practice teacher and the agency coordinator. The module team chair should also be alerted.
- There should be an additional placement meeting which the practice tutor should minute.
- After the meeting, the practice tutor should write a short report outlining the circumstances of the placement breakdown, and submit this to the staff tutor, together with minutes of any additional meetings.

- The report must be made available – by the practice tutor – to the student, and to the practice teacher who may want to make a written comment. The representative from the student’s sponsoring agency and, where appropriate, the representative from the provider agency should be invited to comment on the report. Written comments must be returned to the practice tutor within five working days.
- The report and all comments should be sent to the staff tutor. The staff tutor should ensure that the report, comments and minutes of previous meetings are shared with the module team chair.
- The module team chair and the staff tutor will jointly make the final decision in relation to the outcomes.
- The staff tutor will write to the student, the practice teacher and the representative from both the sponsoring and the provider agency to notify them of decisions within 10 days after the report (and any additional comments from the student, the practice teacher and the agency representative) has been received. The letter should be copied to the module team chair.
- In all circumstances when a placement is terminated, the practice tutor should ask the practice teacher to write a brief report on the student’s progress in relation to the Key Roles and NOS and future learning needs. The practice tutor should forward this report to the staff tutor.
- In exceptional cases (not including conduct issues), if it is impossible to follow the above process due to an agency’s circumstances, the staff tutor will decide whether there are grounds for terminating the placement in consultation with the module team chair. A report of the circumstances should be written by the practice tutor, as fully as possible, and made available to the student and other relevant parties. All efforts should be made to secure a report of the student’s practice learning so far.
- The Practice Assessment Panel and the relevant Professional Conduct Panel may also want to see such reports.

If a placement is terminated, the student will fail the placement and will not be able to complete and pass the relevant practice learning module. Depending on the reason for the termination, it may be possible for the student to retake the module and placement in future, provided there is sufficient time to complete the degree qualification within the University’s timescale. This decision would also be subject to agreement from the Module Chair, the sponsor, the Department of Health (if a funded student) and the NIDSWP.

6 One hundred things to do during your placement

This section is for you, the student. It provides some practical activities and tasks to support your professional development when you are on placement. These are not primarily about learning theories, methods or skills – you will find plenty of activities and support for those in the module materials and in your practice workshops held face-to-face and online. The ideas here are relatively practical things that you can do by yourself or in dialogue with your practice teacher. You probably won't have time to do them all. It is entirely up to you how and when you use the ideas, but the module team suggests that you read through the list and highlight the ones that you intend to try out.

Some of the ideas here are based on a book you may find useful:

- Lomax, R. and Jones, K. (2014) *Surviving Your Social Work Placement*. 2nd edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

1	Transition to the student role	(a)	Arrange to work from a new desk if your placement is in your own place of work.
		(b)	On your name badge and agency ID, ensure that your role is identified clearly as 'Student Social Worker'. Or make your own badge (for office use only) and wear it until you and your team get used to your new role.
		(c)	In the first three weeks of your placement, visit at least three agencies related to your service user group that you had not visited before.
		(d)	In your first week, if your placement is in your own place of work, visit each of your colleagues and explain your changed role as a student.
		(e)	Have a look at the organisation's mission statement.
2	Supervision	(a)	Ask your practice teacher how they would like you to prepare for supervision meetings. Plan, agree, and enter in your diary, supervision dates and times as far in advance as possible.
		(b)	Prepare carefully for every supervision session, including drawing up an agenda of the items that you wish to discuss.
		(c)	Try to make your supervision sessions an exploratory dialogue with your practice teacher rather than merely a reporting session on what you have done.
		(d)	Keep your own log to reflect on your feelings and actions during interventions with service users to draw on during supervision meetings.
		(e)	Read (or re-read) the K216 Introductory learning guide about 'making active use of supervision'.
3	Skills on placement	(a)	During your induction period, make a list of all the practice skills you think you will need in order to work with service users.

		Discuss with your practice teacher which skills are a priority for you to develop.
	(b)	What organisational skills do you need or already have (time management, diary planning, etc.)?
	(c)	Observe other team members and try to identify practical and interpersonal skills that make for a positive office culture. Evaluate your own skills in this respect, and plan how to develop them.
	(d)	What are you especially good at? Identify skills that you can transfer from other areas of your life.
	(e)	Find out about Honey and Mumford's 'learning styles' and identify your preferred approach to learning new skills.

4	Learning from colleagues	(a) Seek an opportunity to co-work with a colleague and make an effort to observe the skills they use in practice.
		(b) On occasions, ask members of your team directly for comments on your performance.
		(c) With your practice teacher, discuss opportunities for shadowing a colleague or observing a meeting.
		(d) Ask if you can chair a team meeting and then ask for feedback from colleagues.
		(e) Ask to observe a colleague who needs to make a difficult phone call to a service user. Make a note of what you have learned from this.

5	Obtaining and using feedback	(a) Research some methods of obtaining honest and detailed feedback from service users or carers – ask other students or your practice teacher, or browse library or web-based resources.
		(b) Think about how the power imbalance between social workers and service users or carers might impact on the feedback they give you. How can you encourage feedback?
		(c) Reflect carefully on the service user's or carer's feedback – what does this tell you about the strengths and weaker areas of your practice? Discuss this with your practice teacher.
		(d) Discuss with your practice teacher how you can get and make use of feedback from colleagues.
		(e) If you don't understand the feedback from your practice teacher or another colleague, ask them for additional detail about the various elements of your approach and skills.

6	Dealing professionally with	(a) Make some notes about the feelings you experience when you have received some negative feedback.
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constructive criticism	<p>(b) Try to identify constructive ways in which you can use critical feedback to improve your practice.</p> <hr/> <p>(c) Discuss the issue of constructive criticism with your practice teacher and try to develop a shared understanding of what this means in the context of practice learning.</p> <hr/> <p>(d) Identify a person who you trust and who could support you when you are feeling upset about criticism.</p> <hr/> <p>(e) Think about – and practise – some phrases and words that you could use to show a professional approach when you receive negative feedback.</p>
7 Social work values and ethics	<p>(a) Make sure you know the difference between ‘values’ and ‘ethics’.</p> <hr/> <p>(b) List your five most important personal values. Have any of these been challenged significantly in your practice so far? Reflect on how you have dealt with this, or think about possible scenarios when this may potentially occur. Discuss in supervision with your practice teacher.</p> <hr/> <p>(c) Note a situation where a colleague or a service user experiences a conflict between their values and the expectations or actions required of them by societal or institutional pressure. Identify how they tried to resolve this conflict, and how successfully they achieved this.</p> <hr/> <p>(d) What is the social work value that you seem to espouse and deliver on the best or the least well? Reflect on the reasons for this.</p> <hr/> <p>(e) Keep a note of ethical and professional ‘dilemmas’ (experienced by yourself or colleagues) and discuss possible responses with your practice teacher.</p>
8 Reflecting on diversity and anti-oppressive practice	<p>(a) Discuss with colleagues or your practice teacher, the extent to which ‘partnership’ with service users is possible in your agency.</p> <hr/> <p>(b) Think about your own cultural or social identity, and consider how your experiences may impact on your relationships with service users in your placement.</p> <hr/> <p>(c) Think about a service user who has a very a different cultural or social identity from your own. Consider what, if any, is the service user’s experience of discrimination, and how you might mitigate this as part of your social work intervention.</p> <hr/> <p>(d) How ‘diverse’ is the staff group in your agency? Think about the reasons for this and discuss with your practice teacher if appropriate.</p> <hr/> <p>(e) Most people have on one occasion or another failed to directly challenge an oppressive incident they have observed. Consider</p>

		an occasion from your own experience, and what may have been the implications and consequences of your inaction.
9	Thinking about rights and social justice	(a) Note down the three most important 'rights' that you enjoy currently.
		(b) Identify whether your placement agency has any direct and specific responsibility for promoting and defending certain rights for service users, either individually or as a group. Discuss this with your practice teacher.
		(c) Search online for the European Convention on Human Rights. Note examples of where a service user is enjoying protection in terms of any particular article or clause; alternatively, where human rights have been denied them. Discuss your observations with your practice teacher.
		(d) Consider the issues involved in determining the importance of one person's or group's rights with another person or group. Discuss with your practice teacher.
		(e) Consider what role social workers could or ought to take in determining or upholding the rights of service users who do not recognise the rights of others. Discuss this with your practice teacher.
10	Understanding the local community	(a) Find opportunities to explore one or more neighbourhoods with which your placement agency engages. Use local shops, cafés, public transport. Observe and listen then discuss your 'findings' with your practice teacher.
		(b) Make a list of factors that contribute to social isolation and the exclusion of service users who use your agency.
		(c) What local services can you identify that provide evidence of strengths and resources in the community?
		(d) Read the local newspaper to find out about local issues.
		(e) Find out what service users and colleagues like and dislike about the area.
11	Finding out about the social, political and economic context of your agency	(a) Search online about what your local MP thinks about social work, social workers, and social care.
		(b) Where appropriate, ask to attend as an observer at a high-level meeting of managers or senior officers in your placement agency or Local Authority. Discuss with your practice teacher what you learned about the legal, political and organisational constraints which impact on social work in your agency.
		(c) Attend a local community meeting or public meeting of a local agency campaigning on issues related to social welfare or health.

		<p>(d) In the catchment area of your agency, visit both an area of affluence and an area of deprivation. What differences most struck you?</p>
		<p>(e) Find out about the range of different professionals and agencies with which social workers in your team have contact.</p>
		<p>(a) Identify an incident or a piece of work where a particular theory may help you understand a situation, and discuss this with your practice teacher.</p>
12	Relating theory and practice	<p>(b) What social work publications are available to your team? Do these provide helpful ideas about working with service users?</p>
		<p>(c) Find out what opportunities there are to keep up with the latest social work research in your agency.</p>
		<p>(d) Find out which approaches discussed in your module materials are used in your practice setting.</p>
		<p>(e) Ask your practice teacher about the risk assessment tools used by staff in your agency.</p>
		<p>(a) For a single day in your placement, keep a detailed record of your feelings through the working day and the associated experiences linked to those feelings. On the next day, or later, review this record and identify two or three things that you have learned from this process and which you can take forward to improve your practice.</p>
		<p>(b) Arrange to discuss an area of theory with your practice teacher.</p>
13	Critical reflection and analysis	<p>(c) Tell somebody about something in your practice that went really well because of your intervention and skills. Be specific about what you did that made your intervention effective.</p>
		<p>(d) Choose a model of reflective learning that you find easy to use (like Kolb, 1984 or Gibbs, 1988). Use this to reflect on a specific practice experience and discuss with your practice teacher.</p>
		<p>(e) Remember to carefully read and reflect on your practice teacher's feedback about your Records of practice – don't just treat a completed one as just 'another box ticked'.</p>
		<p>(a) What does it mean to communicate 'professionally'? Observe colleagues, and think about your own dealings with others in your current or previous agency. Make two lists of behaviours that aid and hinder communication. Discuss your ideas with your practice teacher.</p>
14	Professional communication	<p>(b) Are you an active listener? Explore ways to assess and evaluate your skills in this regard.</p>

	<p>(c) Discuss with your practice teacher the impact of power differentials between professionals, and how you might communicate effectively in such contexts.</p>
	<p>(d) Observe communication in a multi-agency meeting and, afterwards, discuss with your practice teacher.</p>
	<p>(e) How can you express disagreement in a professional manner? Ask to look at examples of letters and reports which communicate an alternative professional opinion and/or ask colleagues how they verbally manage this.</p>
	<p>(a) Ask your practice teacher whether you can have access to a selection of social work reports to read. Try to identify which are the most effective in terms of conveying information and why this is.</p>
	<p>(b) Ask a colleague whether you can see a report they have written which is advocating on behalf of someone using the service. Ask them to talk you through how they go about this task and the forms of words they chose.</p>
15	Report writing
	<p>(c) Ask to read a selection of case files or records compiled over a long period of time. Identify differences and similarities in style of recording and discuss with your practice teacher the reasons for these changes.</p>
	<p>(d) Ask for specific feedback about a record or a report you write.</p>
	<p>(e) Suggest a team discussion on report writing where colleagues can share how they have developed their skills.</p>
	<p>(a) Research a topic of interest to your agency, and arrange to present it to your team or lead a discussion about it.</p>
	<p>(b) Find an article in any recent addition of the British Journal of Social Work (available online via the OU Library) that discusses a particular practice issue that is topical in your practice learning agency. Share and discuss this article with your practice teacher or your colleagues.</p>
16	Professional leadership
	<p>(c) Identify a potential problem in your agency and think about how you could raise this problem in a constructive way. Discuss with your practice teacher.</p>
	<p>(d) Offer to share with your team something you have learned about in your academic study: a relevant journal article, a social work theory or method, a policy issue, etc.</p>
	<p>(e) Arrange to represent your agency at a community or an inter-agency event, and prepare or reflect on this experience with your practice teacher.</p>

17	Professionalism	(a)	Look at the NISCC Standards for Social Work Students, and make sure you understand what is expected of a social work professional.
		(b)	What do 'professional boundaries' mean in the context of your agency? Discuss this with your practice teacher.
		(c)	Is there a dress code in your agency? Do you think this promotes professionalism and, if so, how?
		(d)	What examples of 'professionalism' have you seen in other people? Try to identify behaviours that you would like to develop for yourself.
		(e)	Identify positive actions you could take to balance your personal and professional priorities.
18	Looking after yourself	(a)	Find out what 'stress' means, and how it manifests itself.
		(b)	Identify what things act as 'stressors' for you, and think (in advance) how you could manage these.
		(c)	Look at the professional code for England, and see what it says about situations where you need to share with your practice teacher or manager that you are feeling stressed.
		(d)	Identify sources of support for when you are feeling upset or stressed.
		(e)	Make sure you have read your agency's lone working policy and observe it.
19	Endings	(a)	Identify what 'endings' in your life have been, or are likely to be, the most difficult for you personally.
		(b)	Ask your colleagues how they conclude relationships with service users.
		(c)	In consultation with your practice teacher, discuss and prepare for ending your work with service users.
		(d)	Plan a positive ending for your last few days with your placement team.
		(e)	Who would you like to thank, and what would be the most appropriate way to show your appreciation to this person?
20	Evaluating own learning and identifying priorities for next placement	(a)	For your personal use, at the beginning of the placement, write a list of the things you are most worried about, those you know the least about, and things that you hope you will not be asked to do in your forthcoming period of practice learning. Put this list in a sealed envelope, and open it again on the day of your final supervision session. If appropriate, reflect on some of your observations of this exercise with your practice teacher.

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- (b) In your life so far, think about what may have been for you the most powerful and enduring learning experience. Try to identify aspects of this experience that you may seek to replicate or be usefully aware about in your practice placement.
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- (c) Write a list of the things you know about social work practice that you didn't know before you began your social work studies.
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- (d) Think about the skills you would like to prioritise for your next placement or your first year in practice.
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- (e) What is the one thing that you absolutely must learn in your next placement? Be sure to communicate this to your practice teacher, agency coordinator and practice tutor.
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Appendix 1 The 6 Key Roles and 20 National Occupational Standards

While the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Social Work each address a discrete function within social work practice, the statements of knowledge and understanding within them are by their nature cross-cutting. These statements represent the extensive body of knowledge that underpins social work practice as a whole. Repetition of many items is therefore inevitable across the NOS themselves.

Functional map/key roles for social work

Key role 1	Maintain professional accountability
SW1	Maintain an up-to-date knowledge and evidence base for social work practice
SW2	Develop social work practice through supervision and reflection
Key role 2	Practise professional social work
SW3	Manage your role as a professional social worker
SW4	Exercise professional judgement in social work
SW5	Manage ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts
SW6	Practise social work in multi-disciplinary contexts
SW7	Prepare professional reports and records relating to people
Key role 3	Promote engagement and participation
SW8	Prepare for social work involvement
SW9	Engage people in social work practice
SW10	Support people to participate in decision-making processes
SW11	Advocate on behalf of people
Key role 4	Assess needs, risks and circumstances
SW12	Assess needs, risks and circumstances in partnership with those involved
SW13	Investigate harm or abuse
Key role 5	Plan for person-centred outcomes
SW14	Plan in partnership to address short and longer term issues
SW15	Agree risk management plans to promote independence and responsibility
SW16	Agree plans where there is risk of harm or abuse

Key role 6	Take actions to achieve change
SW17	Apply methods and models of social work intervention to promote change
SW18	Access resources to support person-centred solutions
SW19	Evaluate outcomes of social work practice
SW20	Disengage at the end of social work involvement

The Key Roles and Social Work Standards Matrix

Key Role 1: Maintain Professional Accountability				
SW Standard	Performance Criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 1 Maintain an up-to-date knowledge and evidence base for social work practice	P1 Establish your own strategy for maintaining an up-to- date knowledge and evidence base for social work practice	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuning in state-ment • Supervision minutes • Presentation to team meeting/ midway pre-sentation • Evaluations of practice • Learning log 	Record of Practice Direct Observation
	P2 Research statu-tory, legal and proce-dural requirements and academic literature re-lating to social work practice			
	P3 Analyse the statu-tory and non- statutory powers exercised by social workers and or-ganisations			
	P4 Review the out-comes of previous so-cial work practice for individuals, families, groups and commu-nities locally			
	P5 Review your own knowledge about issues of equality, fairness, ac-cess and anti-discrimi-natory, anti-sectarian practise and provision			
	P6 Synthesise infor-mation to understand how evidence-based practice applies in your own role			
	P7 Plan, with support, how to integrate current and emerging research into your own practice			

Key Role 1: Maintain Professional Accountability

SW Standard	Performance Criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 2 Develop social work practice through supervision and reflection</p>	<p>P1 Seek professional supervision to develop accountable social work practice P2 Prepare for formal professional supervision in ways that will maximise its effectiveness P3 Access additional sources of support compatible with professional social work principles P4 Use feedback from supervision and other sources to inform reflection on and evaluation of your social work practice P5 Reflect on the cultural context in which you practice and how this impacts upon your work P6 Reflect on your own values, beliefs and assumptions and how they impact on your social work practice P7 Integrate learning within practice P8 Contribute your own knowledge of best practice to the continuing development of the profession</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision minutes • Evaluation of practice • Service user/ carer feedback • Feedback from team/other professionals • Reflective accounts 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 2: Practise Professional social work

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 3 Manage your role as a professional social worker</p>	<p>P1 Work within the context of your own organisation P2 Establish the parameters of your own work role and how the responsibilities of others link with these P3 Ensure your understanding of processes in which you may be involved P4 Plan, with support, how to prioritise work in order to use your time effectively P5 Take steps to ensure your safety in situations where there is risk of harm to you P6 Recognise the effect that work situations may have on your well-being and your practice P7 Implement strategies to develop your personal and professional resilience P8 Challenge your own assumptions that could lead to discrimination in your practice P9 Reflect on the way you manage your role, to ensure continual development and continued professional registration</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuning in • Supervision • Care plans • Evaluations • Time management • Understanding of legislation/policies/procedures • Reflection 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 2: Practise Professional social work

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 4 Exercise professional judgement in social work	P1 Analyse a range of information that will inform professional decisions about specific complex situations	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments • Multidisciplinary working • Critical reflection on practice • Direct observations • Supervision • Significant interviews • User feedback 	Record of Practice Direct Observation
	P2 Develop a range of options for addressing the situation			
	P3 Evaluate the implications of different options for the people involved			
	P4 Exercise professional judgement to make evidence-based decisions			
	P5 Present both verbally and in writing the rationale for your professional judgements			
	P6 Justify your professional judgements where others disagree or challenge them			
	P7 Challenge judgements of others that appear to conflict with the evidence or to work against people's best interests			
	P8 Consider the need to modify your own judgement where new evidence is presented			

Key Role 2: Practise Professional social work

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 5 Manage ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts</p>	<p>P1 Recognise ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts that arise in the course of social work practice P2 Review sources of information and knowledge that can inform professional judgements about ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts P3 Reflect on how your own values and experiences may impact on managing ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts P4 Make professional judgements taking account of ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts P5 Support others to understand how ethical considerations may have affected decisions made P6 Evaluate outcomes of how you have managed ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts to inform your future practice</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision minutes • Tuning in and evaluations • Process records • Learning log • Direct observations • Assessment 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 2: Practise Professional social work

<p>SW 6 Practise social work in multi-disciplinary contexts</p>	<p>P1 Develop collaborative working relationships with professionals from other disciplines P2 Uphold the role and function of social work when working in a multi-disciplinary context P3 Develop your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of others involved in multi-disciplinary work P4 Ensure that social work principles, codes of practice and values are applied when working with others P5 Contribute to identifying and agreeing the goals and objectives of the multi-disciplinary work P6 Negotiate responsibilities that respect legal, ethical, organisational and professional boundaries in a multi-disciplinary context P7 Negotiate agreements on systems for the exchange of information which contribute to the safeguarding and well-being of individuals and the wider community P8 Apply social work knowledge and skills to deal constructively with disagreements and conflict within multi-disciplinary relationships P9 Contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of the multi-disciplinary work</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of formal decision-making meetings • Feedback from team/ other professional • Contracts • Care plans • Case records • Correspondence • Evaluations of practice 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 2: Practise Professional social work

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 7 Prepare professional reports and records relating to people</p>	<p>P1 Use language appropriate to the intended audience to construct professional reports that are evidence-based, analytical and coherent P2 Maintain accurate, complete, retrievable, and up-to-date records P3 Ensure reports and records can be understood by those who have a right to see them P4 Make use of information communication technology that supports information exchange within and across disciplines and organisations P5 Ensure that records and reports comply with legal and organisational requirements, balancing the tension between safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection</p>	<p>Stages: 2 or 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision minutes • Reports • Service use feedback • Care plans • Contracts • Work plans • Up-to date , clear and accurate records • Knowledge and understanding of policies and procedures 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 3: Promote engagement and participation

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 8 Prepare for social work involvement	P1 Clarify details of the referral and any associated risks P2 Engage appropriately with others to access additional information P3 Investigate legal requirements and organisational procedures with a bearing on the proposed involvement P4 Research further information that may inform your initial involvement P5 Reflect on aspects of self that may have an impact on the social work relationship P6 Synthesise all information gathered P7 Make a professional judgement with support from others about the best form of initial involvement	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuning in • Contact records • Email/telephone contacts • Process records • Reports • Personal audit of knowledge, values, skills • Ability to reflect • Reading and knowledge • Supervision 	

Key Role 3: Promote engagement and participation

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 9 Engage people in social work practice</p>	<p>P1 Plan how to use communication to facilitate initial engagement P2 Use communication skills to establish the social work relationship P3 Support people to find effective ways to communicate their views, needs and preferences P4 Develop understanding in others of your own and the organisation's duties and responsibilities P5 Support people to explore their own circumstances, their existing networks and other resources available to them P6 Engage people to participate in finding creative ways to achieve change P7 Work with others to address any hostility or resistance encountered P8 Appraise the impact of self in sustaining engagement and partnership working P9 Seek feedback from people on how effective your engagement with them has been P10 Adjust the way you develop and sustain engagement in the light of reflection and feedback</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuning in • Assessments • Process records • Direct observations • User feedback • Agency records • Ability to reflect 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 3: Promote engagement and participation

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 10 Support people to participate in decision-making processes	P1 Assess people's capacity to navigate systems and make their voices heard	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments • Process records • Direct observations • Care plans • Feedback from service user/ carers • Case Conference • Case discussions • Agency records • Supervision records • Reviews • Reflection on interactions • Reviews with service users/ carers 	Record of Practice Direct Observation
	P2 Agree the level and nature of your own contribution in supporting people to participate in decision-making processes			
	P3 Ensure literature and documentation is made available to people in their preferred language and format			
	P4 Support people to understand the concepts of power and empowerment in different situations			
	P5 Explain processes and procedures to enable people to participate as fully as possible			
	P6 Work with people to build their capacity to advocate for themselves			
	P7 Carry out your agreed role to support participation in decision-making processes			
	P8 Confirm people's understanding of the outcomes of their participation and any decisions made			
	P9 Identify any prejudice and discrimination encountered			
	P10 Promote social justice by challenging systems or processes that present barriers to people's participation			
	P11 Review the effectiveness of support provided			

Key Role 3: Promote engagement and participation

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 11 Advocate on behalf of people	P1 Establish if people require you to advocate for them in specific situations P2 Clarify with people the desired outcomes of the advocacy and other possible outcomes P3 Support people to participate to the extent that they are able P4 Make professional judgements about any potential conflicts of interest that may arise if you act as advocate P5 Collaborate with people to prepare a case that represents their best interests P6 Make representation to achieve desired outcomes P7 Communicate outcomes of the advocacy in ways that can be understood P8 Review the effectiveness of advocacy	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observations • Case records • Reports • Service user/ carer feedback • Review meetings • Supervision 	Record of Practice Direct Observation

Key Role 4: Assess needs, risks and circumstances

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 12 Assess needs, risks and circumstances in partnership with those involved</p>	<p>P1 Listen to people’s own accounts of their situation P2 Work holistically with people to enable them to identify, clarify and express their strengths, needs and expectations P3 Identify obstacles that create limitations for people P4 Assist people to identify what would help them build on their own strengths, abilities and achievements P5 Work with others to gather further information relevant to the assessment P6 Work with people to identify any risks associated with their situation P7 Analyse the nature, level, urgency and implications of any risks identified, in compliance with legal and other requirements P8 Assess the balance of people’s rights and responsibilities in relation to any risks identified P9 Make professional judgements about needs, risks and protective factors to inform planning P10 Record assessment information accurately and in accordance with organisational requirements</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial assessment • Risk assessment • Supervision minutes • Direct observations • Case records • Review reports • Feedback from multidisciplinary colleagues • Reflection 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 4: Assess needs, risks and circumstances

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 13 Investigate harm or abuse</p>	<p>P1 Identify behaviours and environments that present potential risk of harm or abuse P2 Work within organisational procedures and in partnership with others to plan an investigation into suspected harm or abuse P3 Maintain a focus on safeguarding the person at risk throughout the investigation process P4 Use persistence and assertiveness to gather direct evidence about the harm or abuse P5 Co-ordinate other evidence from a variety of sources and disciplines to assess the level of risk P6 Make a professional judgement in partnership with others on the level and nature of intervention required P7 Develop options for achieving immediate and longer term outcomes P8 Make recommendations in partnership with others about the intervention required P9 Record information relating to the investigation accurately and in accordance with organisational and other requirements</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify interventions required • Direct observation • Information gathering • Contact records • Action planning • Referrals to other agencies/professionals • Supervision minutes • Attendance at Case conference • Case notes 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 5: Plan for Person-Centred Outcomes

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 14 Plan in partnership to address short and longer term issues</p>	<p>P1 Support people to understand the planning process and their rights and responsibilities within it</p> <p>P2 Work with people to agree the overall outcome that the plan should achieve</p> <p>P3 Establish agreement on short, medium and long term objectives</p> <p>P4 Support people to recognise resources within themselves, their personal networks and the community</p> <p>P5 Explore with the people involved a range of possible solutions and their feasibility</p> <p>P6 Formulate a plan based on collated information</p> <p>P7 Establish agreement to the plan with those involved in it or affected by it</p> <p>P8 Agree how the plan will be monitored and reviewed</p> <p>P9 Record the plan and any issues or needs that the plan does not seek to address</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment/ Review Reports • Care plans • Direct observation of practice • Action plans • Agency records • Service user feedback • Supervision minutes • Minutes of formal decision-making meetings • Review reports 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 5: Plan for Person-Centred Outcomes

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 15 Agree risk management plans to promote independence and responsibility</p>	<p>P1 Review your own and the organisation's legal and professional duties when supporting people to balance risks, rights and responsibilities</p> <p>P2 Assess the individual's capacity to make decisions regarding risk</p> <p>P3 Assess risk according to legal and organisational requirements</p> <p>P4 Use assertiveness to ensure that the actions of others work in the best interests of the individual and take account of the wider community</p> <p>P5 With the individual, develop a plan to minimise risks while maximising independence and the responsibility for taking positive risks</p> <p>P6 Work with the individual and others to ensure they understand the reasons why specific safeguards need to be put in place</p> <p>P7 Establish agreement to the plan with all those who will share the management of risk</p> <p>P8 Agree a strategy for monitoring and reviewing the risk management plan</p> <p>P9 Complete records of the risk management plan</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and evidence base • Assessment • Minutes of formal decision-making meetings • Contracts • Care plans • Contact records • Correspondence • Setting time-frames 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 5: Plan for Person-Centred Outcomes				
SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 16 Agree plans where there is risk of harm or abuse</p>	<p>P1 Analyse from the outcome of an investigation the degree of risk to a person, to their immediate or extended network, or to the community P2 Collaborate with the person, those close to them, colleagues and professionals from other disciplines to develop a plan that will protect the person, those in their networks and the community P3 Support the person to be as fully involved as possible in the planning process P4 Negotiate agreement on the least restrictive and least damaging plan of action that will offer short term safety in respect of the risks evidenced P5 Develop a long-term therapeutic plan to restore or continue to provide protection P6 Review plans with others at agreed times P7 Make changes to the plan in response to the trajectory of the intervention in consultation with others P8 Produce professional records and reports to document plans, progress, changes to plans and outcomes</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessment • Risk management • Interagency working • Direct observations • Person-centred plan • Evaluations • Reflection • Supervision process • Methods of intervention • Review reports • Review meeting 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 6: Take actions to achieve change

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 17 Apply methods and models of social work intervention to promote change</p>	<p>P1 Research a range of methods and models of social work intervention that may promote change in specific situations P2 Analyse how your own professional and interpersonal skills can be demonstrated within methods and models of social work intervention P3 Articulate your rationale for choosing particular interventions in specific situations P4 Use your own professional and interpersonal skills to apply social work interventions P5 Monitor through reflection in practice the effectiveness of the interventions in achieving change P6 Revise interventions to take account of reflective monitoring</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/tuning in • Reflection on own knowledge, skills and values • Assessment and planning • Implementation of method of intervention • Ongoing evaluation and review • Supervision • Direct observations 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Key Role 6: Take actions to achieve change

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 18 Access resources to support person-centred solutions	P1 Confirm with people the outcomes and the resources required to achieve them	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction • Referrals to other agencies/ professionals • Assessment of needs • Contact records and interagency paperwork • Agree action plan • Supervision records • Review meeting • Reflection 	Record of Practice Direct Observation
	P2 Carry out actions needed to secure agreed resources			
	P3 Keep people informed of progress in securing resources			
	P4 Support people to deal with any unexpected or unwelcome news that may arise when securing resources			
	P5 Agree a way of monitoring and reviewing the use of resources, to meet the needs of both the people involved and the organisation			
	P6 Provide monitoring information on resources to meet organisational requirements and to inform service planning, commissioning strategies and capacity building			
	P7 Evaluate the effectiveness of resources in achieving outcomes for people over time			

Key Role 6: Take actions to achieve change

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
SW 19 Evaluate outcomes of social work practice	P1 Review the intended outcomes of social work practice in specific situations	Stages: 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review meeting • Reflective learning • Feedback from service users/ carers • Engagement in supervision • Supervision records • Future learning needs • Feedback from Team 	Record of Practice Direct Observation
	P2 Analyse information from a range of perspectives on progress towards outcomes			
	P3 In partnership with others, evaluate outcomes for individuals, their families or communities			
	P4 Analyse the outcomes for your own organisation			
	P5 Reflect on your own role and use of self in specific social work interventions			
	P6 In partnership with others, revise plans for practice and interventions to take account of evaluations			
	P7 Identify lessons learned that should inform your future practice and the work of your organisation			
	P8 Articulate how your own evaluations may contribute to the development of social work as a profession			

Key Role 6: Take actions to achieve change

SW Standard	Performance criteria	Practice Learning Stage	Practice Learning Indicators	Practice Learning Evidence
<p>SW 20 Disengage at the end of social work involvement</p>	<p>P1 Agree a plan for disengagement when the end of your involvement is approaching P2 Explain to people the reasons for your forthcoming disengagement P3 Provide people with information on the closure or continuity of support for them P4 Arrange for the transfer or closure of information relating to social work involvement P5 Complete required documentation to close your involvement</p>	<p>Stages: 2 and 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision records • Process record • Direct observation • Review meetings • Service user/ carer feedback • Records of handover meetings • Contact records 	<p>Record of Practice Direct Observation</p>

Appendix 2 Statements of differential for stages of practice learning

Stage Indicators	Stage One Foundation	Stage Two Application	Stage Three Integrated Application
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of key theoretical concepts which inform social work practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning ability to apply social work theories and methods to direct and inform practice Uses appropriate sociological/psychological material to further understanding of service users' situations Can relate knowledge of law and social policy to agency function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates ability to select, apply and sustain appropriate social work methods and demonstrate explicit use of same Demonstrates informed and critical awareness of agency function Can critically apply a range of theoretical perspectives and research to support evidence-based practice

