

Student and Mentor Practice Guide for the Assistant Practitioner Foundation Degree Programme



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Student and Mentor Practice Guide for the Assistant Practitioner Foundation Degree Programme

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Student and Mentor Practice Guide for the Assistant Practitioner Foundation Degree Programme

Introduction

This student and mentor practice guide has been developed by the Work Based Education Facilitator (WBEF) Network to support learning and development within the workplace. It provides important information to help ensure that both Trainee Assistant Practitioners (TAPs) and mentors feel adequately prepared for the teaching, learning and assessment methods throughout the practice element of the programme.

The Foundation Degree for Assistant Practitioners is a work-based learning programme of study consisting of 50% theory and 50% practice. As such, in addition to academic assessments, students will be systematically assessed for competence within the workplace. These practice assessments will run across the two year programme and must be passed in order to successfully complete modules or the programme as a whole. This will enable students to meet expected standards and become knowledgeable and competent practitioners.

The Assistant Practitioner

The Assistant Practitioner (AP) role is about providing direct or indirect care and/or treatment to a variety of service users across a wide range of services. It has been developed locally by employers to meet individual service needs.

AP therefore undertake a variety of skills and tasks within Health & Social Care, generally working at Level 4 of the Career Framework (Skills for Care, 2010) or the equivalent within Social Care and non statutory organisations.

In order to meet national requirements of the AP role, the competencies within the Foundation Degree Programme reflect the Core Competence and Knowledge Framework (Skills for Health, 2012) and are mapped to the Core Standards for AP Skills for Health, 2009, National Occupational Standards (NOS) and / or NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF).

‘Qualified AP have a multi-skilled role within a particular area, providing accountable, holistic and diverse care’ Assistant Practitioner Forum (2013). Therefore, it is important to note that **‘The specific technical competencies required for the role will vary depending on the clinical area in which the Assistant Practitioner is working.’** Skills for Health, Core Competence and Knowledge framework for a Higher Level Apprenticeship for Assistant Practitioners (2012:1).

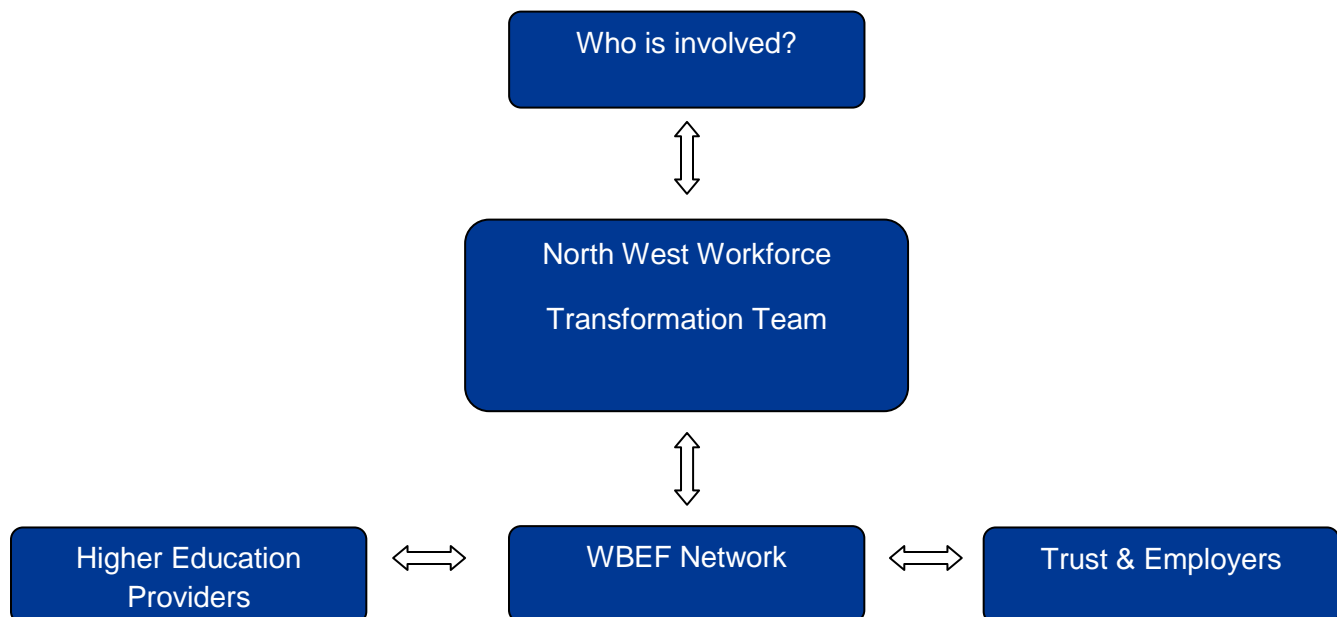
Assistant Practitioner Roles

Current roles being developed can be found in:

- Community and Intermediate Care Teams
- Mental Health
- Learning Disabilities
- Allied Health Profession
- Acute hospital wards and departments e.g., Rapid Assessment Units, Theatres, Outpatients, Accident and Emergency
- Maternity
- Children's services
- Hospice/End of Life Services
- Social Care
- Reablement Services

Organisational Partnerships

The diagram below shows the relationship between the organisations involved in developing the AP role. The WBEF is key in helping to maintain effective communication between the stakeholders.



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North West Workforce Transformation Team

The North West Workforce Transformation Team in partnership with employing organisations transforms the work force and builds quality services for the future. It provides support to organisations developing the AP role. This includes the payment of tuition fees and a contribution to salary replacement costs.

Higher Education Providers

Three universities have been commissioned to deliver the Foundation Degree in Health & Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) they are:

University of Bolton
University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)
University of Chester

WBEF Network

The Work Based Education Facilitators (WBEF) Network is a partnership development between the Workforce Transformation Team and University Hospital of South Manchester (UHSM) Academy. The main focus of the WBEF role is to link between the University and the work place, support role development and offer mentor and student support.

Foundation Degree Programme

Foundation degrees are vocationally focused and equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment and the needs of employers. They also provide a pathway for lifelong learning and the opportunity to progress to other qualifications. The programme integrates a range of academic and work based learning modules over a two year period, which has been designed through close collaboration between employers and programme providers. It is therefore designed to cover a range of knowledge and skills required by the AP with an emphasis on 'fitness for practice'.

- Completion of first year only - 120 credits, level 4 study, Certificate in Higher Education
- Foundation Degree - 240 credits, level 5 studies, equivalent to diploma level
- Opportunity to progress studies to Honours Degree, Level 6 study (360 credits)

The role of the AP will be shaped and directed by the area in which they are employed. The learning and development in practice will be based on what will be required of the role upon qualification. The role will differ depending on where the AP is employed.

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With this in mind, it is strongly recommended that conversations take place between the TAP and the Department Line Manager, at the beginning of the programme regarding the expectations of the role. This will then enable a clear direction with regards to development in practice.

For details of modules undertaken throughout the programme, refer to the university programme handbook.

Work-Based Learning

In addition to academic assessment, students are also assessed in practice by their mentor. All students are required to develop and achieve work based competencies and maintain a professional portfolio. The course is a work-based learning programme of study. Work-based learning recognises and values everyday experiences within the workplace as having the potential to learn through activity. Many of these activities will already be undertaken by the student in their current role. In addition, as the student progresses throughout the programme, they will become involved in many new experiences and these will depend on the area in which they work and the competencies and level of skill which will be required to develop in order to become an effective, competent AP.

Work-based learning (WBL) is recognised as a significant element of professional development and life long learning (Gray, 2001). It is learning at higher education level derived from undertaking paid or unpaid work and includes:

- Learning at work
- Learning through work
- Learning for work (Gray, 2001)

It is this learning which is recognised, assessed and accredited from work at Higher Education level and so extends opportunities to adults who may not have engaged with further study.

Three elements believed to be critical in the work-based learning process are:

- learning is acquired in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand
- knowledge creation and utilisation is a collective activity where learning becomes everyone's job
- learners demonstrate a learning-to learn aptitude, which frees them to question underlying assumptions of practice (Raelin, 2008)

Key points of the Foundation Programme

- Trainees are assessed both in university **and** in practice
- Theoretical work **and** work based practice competencies must be satisfactorily completed in order to pass each module or the programme as a whole
- Trainees are allocated one protected study day, per week, for 2 years
- Trainees attend university one day per week during term time
- During non-term time, study days can be used for self-directed/directed learning
- Remaining contracted hours to be spent in the workplace as a TAP
- Time spent in practice **is not** supernumerary unless a self-directed study day is utilised for this

Attendance at University

Attendance at university is classed by the supporting organisation as a normal paid working day, therefore any absence from university, for example; sickness, child care, carer's leave, must be reported to the work place manager in line with the employers' Sickness and Absence Reporting Procedures. In addition, the University must be informed of any expected or unexpected absence and the WBEF should also be made aware.

Study leave during University Holiday Periods

During the university holiday periods TAPs remain commissioned to have one study day per week, unless on annual leave and unable to study i.e. on holiday. This provides, both the TAP and their mentor, an opportunity to review what learning has taken place and how to make best use of this time. TAPs are required to complete the 'Practice Learning Plan', or equivalent, to evidence their study. During the summer period, students are often required to attend university for taught sessions.

Developmental Support

Throughout the Foundation Degree Programme, learning is viewed as a partnership between the Student, Mentor, Personal Tutor and Work Based Education Facilitator. In addition to this, there is a wide support network available to students, mentors and practice areas. This may include:

Programme Lead
Practice/Clinical Skills Educator
Learning Services

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Library and IT staff
Practice Education Facilitators

All are committed to ensuring students and mentors have a positive learning experience throughout the course and so work collaboratively to achieve this. It is essential that the TAP draws on the support available to get the best out of the programme of study. It is important to note that, as adult learners, students are expected to take ownership of their learning and communicate with the available support staff. The commitment to learning for students and placement areas is defined in the NHS Placement Charter, Health Education North West (HENW), 2013.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role and Responsibilities of the TAP

The Trainee will:

- Work within own organisational terms and conditions
- Take responsibility for own actions and learning needs
- Ensure organisational mandatory training is up to date
- Actively participate in learning activities
- Communicate learning outcomes with mentor
- Take steps to work regularly with mentor - recommended at least once per week
- Arrange and attend meetings with mentor – formal meetings at least three times during each term or semester. Ensure meetings are clearly documented
- Discuss, agree and document learning/action plans with mentor
- Engage with support systems
- Regularly seek feedback on performance and development from relevant others
- Reflect on own learning and development
- Recognise and seek support and guidance when necessary
- Act professionally and in accordance with their Code of Conduct

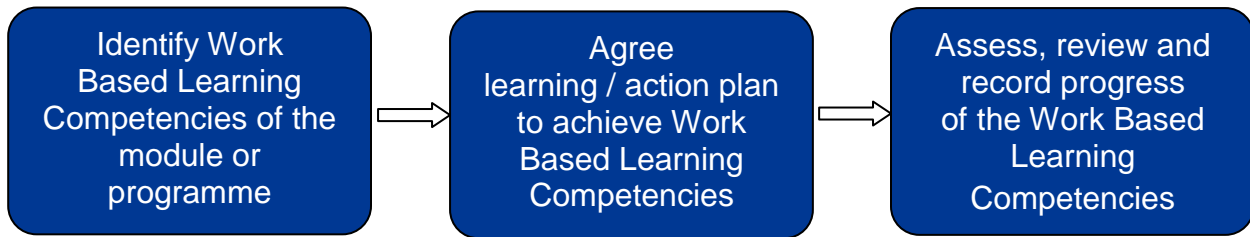
The Role and Responsibilities of the Mentor

Trainees should be mentored by experienced, knowledgeable, competent professionals. Mentors should have a minimum of one year of professional practice, be occupationally competent and may hold a mentorship qualification or equivalent.

The mentor's role is to work closely with the trainee in order to facilitate and assess learning. Whilst the AP role may be unfamiliar to some mentors, the actual process of teaching, learning and assessing remains the same.

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Mentors will need to familiarise themselves with the programme structure and the learning outcomes for each module. All students will have competencies which will require assessment in practice. Submission dates for completed competencies will vary between universities. It is essential that mentors are aware of timescales for submission of academic work and the work based learning competency documentation. This will enable the trainee and mentor to agree timely formal meetings to review progress and identify any learning needs.



The mentor will be required to:

- Offer the Trainee support and guidance in the workplace
- Facilitate teaching and learning in the workplace
- Familiarise self with course content
- Enable the Trainee to make sense of their practice through the application of theory
- Meet regularly with the Trainee at key points within each term or semester
- Provide regular feedback to the Trainee
- Complete practice documentation
- Assess and sign work-based learning competencies
- Will engage with the WBEF as required
- Seek support and guidance from WBEF as required
- Highlight concerns regarding students' progress to WBEF as soon as they arise

The Role and Responsibilities of the WBEF

To ensure a quality learning experience for the TAPs the WBEF will have regular contact with the mentor and manager. This contact will ensure that the TAP is supported to progress throughout the programme by offering guidance to their mentors in the workplace. The WBEF will meet with managers to help establish a clear vision for the role to help focus mentorship and ensuing fitness for practice.

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How can the WBEF help?

The WBEF supports the development of the TAP in a variety of ways. This includes:

- Regular contact with mentors and managers
- Facilitation of learning in the workplace
- Support with practice learning outcomes (competency achievement)
- Guidance with role development
- Exploring learning opportunities to achieve practice competencies
- Assisting mentors development of action/learning plans
- Informative sessions to practice teams about the AP role
- Preparing the mentor for supporting the TAP
- Pastoral Support
- Clarifying the programme structure
- Facilitating communication between: Mentors, TAP, Manager, University, Directorate Leads, Training and Development, Qualified APs and TAPs

WBEF Workplace Support

An initial meeting needs to take place at the start of the programme with the TAP, Mentor, WBEF and Manager

Aim of meeting – To discuss:

- Individual TAP role requirements / Job Description
- TAP programme, including modules, achievement of work based competencies etc.
- Resources/support required by the mentor
- Specific learning/training needs of the TAP
- Role of Mentor and WBEF
- Any issues or concerns



Per semester / trimester – Formal meetings between TAP and Mentor:

- Preliminary/initial – discuss modules, competencies, assessment methods and any other issues or concerns. Identify learning opportunities. Agree learning/action plan and document
- Interim/midterm – review and evaluate progress, as above. Agree learning/action plan and document
- Final – review and evaluate progress. Agree learning/action plan and document
- WBEF will also maintain contact as necessary with the mentor in the work place

NB. This is the minimum amount of formal meetings expected between TAP and Mentor.

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Mentors are responsible for making assessment decisions and are accountable for passing or failing a student's competencies. There may be times when a TAP is failing to progress towards the expected level of competence. In these instances, it is important to remember that support is available for both the mentor and TAP.

The mentor and/or TAP must contact the WBEF for support and advice as soon as concerns arise, particularly if there are concerns that a TAP may fail practice competencies.

An action plan can then be discussed, agreed and documented. This must include clear objectives and review dates. It is essential that communication between mentor and TAP is maintained.

Clear and accurate documentation can support the mentor in any decision to fail a TAP's competencies.

Accountability and delegation

There is often some confusion about who is accountable for the care delivered by an AP. To help clarify this professional bodies have produced guidance on this.

Registered practitioners are accountable for the decision to delegate care, and should only delegate an aspect of care to a person who has had appropriate training and has the relevant assessed and recorded competency. When a registered practitioner is delegating they must be assured that the person to whom they have delegated (the delegatee) fully understands the nature of the task, particularly in relation to what is expected of them. The delegatee should know their limitations and when to seek advice from the appropriate professional in the event that circumstances change. This must be supported with protocols and documentation for the task.

The principles of accountability and delegation remain the same within Social Care and non statutory organisations, with tasks only being delegated to individuals who have been assessed as competent to carry out the tasks.

The Royal College of Nursing has produced several resources on accountability and delegation in practice. You can access these at:

<https://www.rcn.org.uk>

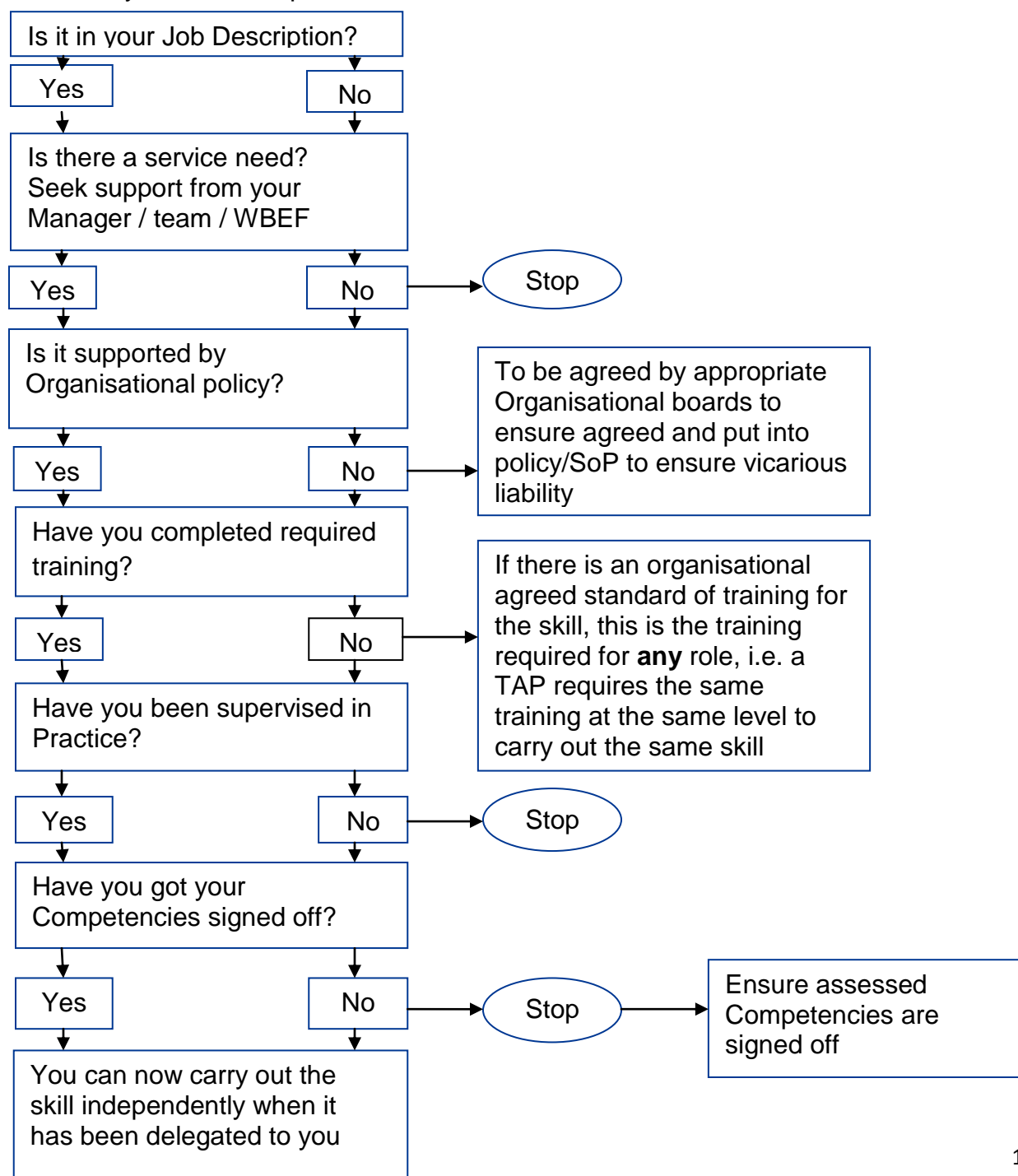
Often it can be useful to share these resources with your colleagues in the work place. Most of them can be downloaded and some can be ordered as pocket guides, leaflets and posters.

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Delegation Process

When delegating or accepting a delegated task the following steps should be considered:-

Can I carry out a skill in practice?



Assessment of competence

Mentors will be required to assess the competence of the Trainee within modules across the two year programme and should refer to relevant professional bodies' standards on competency assessment.

Competence- What is it?

Competence is the ability of an individual to perform effectively at work. Whilst there are many definitions of competence, the common understanding is that competence is about having the right knowledge, skills and abilities to perform at the required level in the work place. TAP will be required to achieve specific competencies in the workplace.

Some of these are related to the theoretical part of your foundation degree. Below are two examples of competencies and how evidence can be achieved, if in doubt please consult your Work Based Education Facilitator for advice. All evidence must be anonymised in agreement with university confidentiality guidelines and organisation's local policy.

Example 1

Core standard Gen 22: Communicate effectively with individuals

Knowledge and understanding may be obtained from lectures within university, customer service training, conflict resolution training, and observing experienced staff in a variety of settings, local organisational training such as information governance, confidentiality and communication skills. Possible evidence:

- Witness statement testimonial evidencing communication skills
- Example of referral process
- Reflection exploring communication styles and methods in the work place
- Communication theory evident in an assignment
- Certificate of attendance at relevant study day
- Project work
- Patient information leaflet designed by learner e.g. health promotion
- A presentation for example a case study

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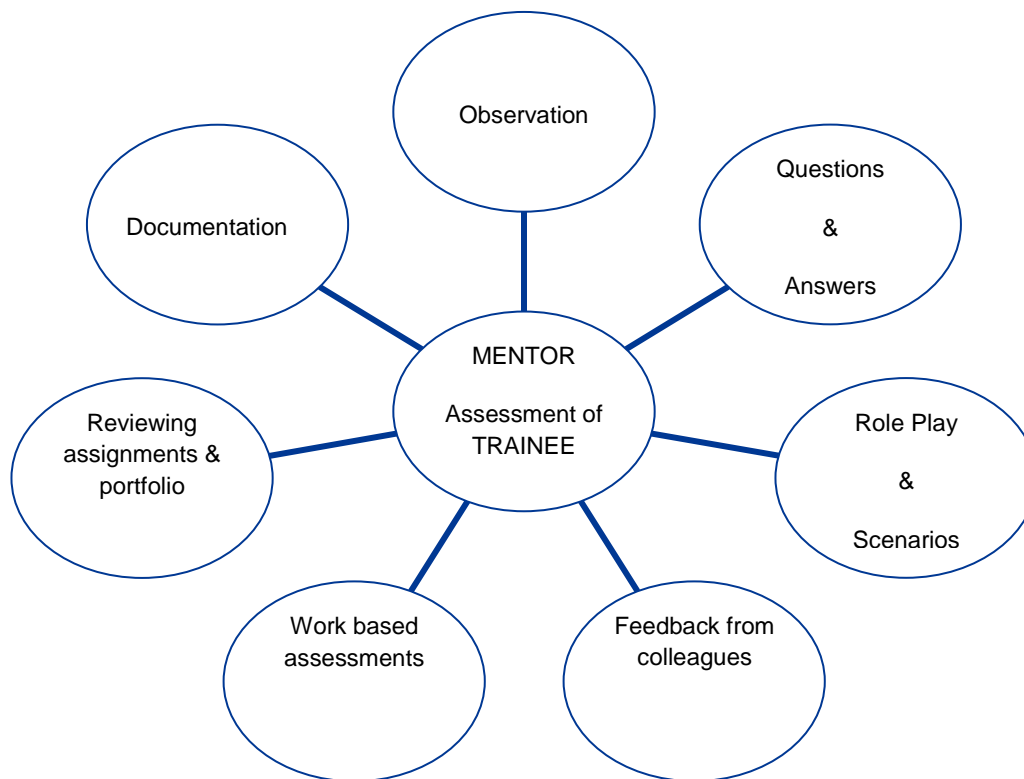
Example 2

Core Standard HSC 24 Ensure your actions support the care, protection and well being of individuals

Knowledge and understanding may be gained through lectures at university, mandatory training such as safe guarding vulnerable adults/children, equality & diversity, health & safety. Appraisal/KSF. Specific in house training, attending Multi- disciplinary case reviews. Possible evidence:

- Safeguarding referral
- Personalised care plan
- Provision of dignified care, e.g., respecting individual's preferences and wishes
- Documentation demonstrating discussion of the benefits of physiotherapy with a patient
- Reflection of an incident/attendance of case review
- Communication methods
- Mandatory Training

Assessment of competence can happen in a variety of ways:



Maintaining a portfolio

Throughout the Foundation Degree Programme, students are required to develop a professional portfolio which should demonstrate their learning and development in practice. The portfolio will contain a range of evidence such as reflective accounts, work based competencies, and learning agreements/plans. Contents of the portfolio will be reviewed regularly by mentor throughout the programme. A portfolio:

‘should be a dynamic document that provides core evidence of an engagement with and examples of core career achievements, core skills, professional abilities and activities to the workplace’ (Hayes, 2013:138).

When creating a portfolio consider:

- Why the evidence is needed
- What the evidence could be
- The quality of the evidence you are including needs to reflect the level of study you are undertaking i.e. references within your reflection
- Confidentiality – be mindful of who will have access
- Developing a sense of ownership
- The university requirements of the portfolio for their assessment processes

Additionally:

- A portfolio can provide you with evidence of your development to becoming an AP and beyond
- A portfolio is an active learning tool and can help identify future goals and action plans for further development and learning
- Contents should be relevant, easily identified and linked to competencies
- Evidence should be dated and signed
- Organise and present the portfolio in a way that enables you to keep it up to date easily, for example, create a contents page for the various types of evidence collected and use file dividers

Reflective Accounts	Action Plans	Appraisal Documentation
SWOT's	Assignment feedback	Certificates
Competencies	Records of visits/shadowing	Presentations
Anonymised documents	Posters/Leaflets/Flyers	Job description/CV
Patient feedback	Learning Agreements	Records of meetings

This is not an exhaustive list, and each university will have its own requirement, so it will be necessary to consult the university handbook to ensure those standards are met.

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Creating your portfolio should be enjoyable and provide a memorable piece of evidence to demonstrate your development and experience of becoming a caring, accountable and knowledgeable practitioner.

Learning Opportunities

TAPs need to make the most of learning opportunities available to them in the workplace. They will need to participate in identifying opportunities which are relevant to their role development. Not all learning activities are planned and it is essential to make the most of work based learning to nurture a safe, competent, compassionate practitioner. Additionally, creating learning opportunities that promote engagement with a variety of professional roles and practice areas can promote an awareness and understanding of the AP role. Below are some examples of learning opportunities within your work place.

Examples of Learning Opportunities

Learning opportunity	Example
Shadowing	Specialist Nurses, Social Workers, Allied Health Professionals
Short visits	Internal/external clinics Courts, Theatres, Labs Case conferences/reviews Charitable organisations Service user groups Area based Social Work Teams
Study Days/Conferences	RCN Congress Internal/External Skills for Health, Skills for Care
Rotation	Community team, dressing clinic, outpatients, day services, home based services
Handovers/Referrals	Internal/external transfers, referrals e.g., Safe guarding teams, Social Workers, Discharge Planning, Dietician, service user reviews
Assistant Practitioner Forum	Contact the Network for further information

The WBEF Network wishes each TAP every success on their journey in becoming an AP. The two years can be challenging at times, however please remember it is important to engage with those who play a vital role in assessing and supporting your development at all times.

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Useful Links and Information

<http://www.rcn.org.uk>

<http://www.nmc-uk.org/Nurses-and-midwives/>

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>

http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/developing_skills/developing_skills.aspx

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Appendix 1

Guidance for Mentors and Managers: Managing Concerns Regarding TAPs Progress

Trainee Assistant Practitioners (TAPs) are band 4, or equivalent roles, within their organisation on successful completion of the programme. It is therefore essential that any issues or concerns that arise during training are actioned promptly.

NB: Maintain accurate documentation throughout

