

Understanding supervision and assessment in nursing

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Reviewed by Helena Low

In 2018, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the regulatory body for all nurses and midwives in the United Kingdom, published new Standards of Proficiency for Registered Nurses and Midwives and Standards for Nursing and Midwifery Education. These came into effect in January 2019. The document set out a new education framework and included changes to some existing standards along with additional new standards which must be met by the Approved Education Institutions (AEPs) and their partners in practice placements and workplace settings. There were significant changes in the standards in relation to supervision and assessment of student nurses in the practice setting. The standards for education document are in 3 parts but this book focuses on Parts 1 – the Standards Framework for nursing and midwifery education and Part 2 Standards for student supervision and assessment. The standards are generic and apply to all fields of nursing and midwifery; other documentation sets out the specific requirements for each field.

The book has been written for anyone who is new to the 2018 NMC Standards and who is involved in student practice learning. The authors, both senior lecturers in nurse education, have primarily focused on practice learning of pre-registration student nurses but they state that much of the discussion will be equally relevant for other health professions.

The book's introduction sets the context by introducing the new framework and takes the reader through the standards, explaining what they mean and how the changes will affect students, practice supervisors and assessors and their roles. The NMC Standards Framework sets out specific aspects of education under 5 headings. Each chapter in the book focuses on one of these headings, discussing

the issues and how the standards' requirements can be met in the AEPs and in practice/workplace settings. There are some useful reflection activities, scenarios and examples for discussion, as well as helpful question and answer sections.

Chapter 2 will be particularly useful to both new and experienced practice supervisors and assessors, helping them to understand the new system of practice learning and explaining the new titles, roles, and responsibilities of those involved in student practice learning. The book ends rather abruptly, though, without a concluding chapter.

This is a useful book for practice supervisors and assessors – its target audience. Nevertheless, it has its limitations. The NMC standards are generic and are applicable to all fields of nursing, but the authors appear to have focused on pre-registration adult nursing students in clinical (i.e. hospital) settings and working in a clinical team. The term 'clinical placement' is used frequently. All nursing students undertake placements in non-clinical settings, for example in social care, community and primary care. The scenarios and examples provided can indeed be applied to other fields of nursing and in other settings and so including relevant scenarios in their quite different placements would have added interest and support to practice supervisors and assessors working with learning disability, mental health and children student nurses, and especially to practice supervisors from different health and care professions.

Standard 3.16 states that students should 'have opportunities throughout their programme to collaborate and learn with and from other professionals'.

In the current complex world of health and social care, currently in the throes of a pandemic, students not only have to develop competencies for uni-professional practice, but they must also learn how to learn and work collaboratively with other professions. I was sorry to note that the one example of working with another professional is a negative one and sits under the heading of a toxic learning environment. The short piece on role modelling in chapter 5 could have provided positive examples of good collaborative interprofessional practice by practice supervisors and assessors.

The book undoubtedly fulfils its aim to provide an initial understanding of the new education framework, standards and roles for practice supervisors, assessors and educators for preregistration

student nurses. However, raising awareness of some of the issues that can, and do, arise in non-clinical placements and in working with other professionals would have been useful to new practice supervisors and assessors. Perhaps a concluding chapter might have been the place to discuss these points briefly and to guide the readers to other sources.

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