



Code of Practice for Social Work Practice Educators

2020 Edition

Foreward

Welcome to the 2020 – Revised Edition – of the NOPT Code of Practice. For over 30 years the National Organisation for Practice Teaching has existed to support its members in their exacting and highly skilled roles as developers of the next generation of social workers, and as gatekeepers of quality standards for the profession.

We are committed to high standards - for practice educators, practice supervisors, practice learning opportunities and social work students. We hope this Code of Practice provides a clear framework for quality practice teaching, and for the provision of practice learning opportunities.

This Code of Practice was originally adopted by the NOPT Annual General meeting in September 1998 but has been revised to take account of recent changes in terminology and the PEPS refresh (BASW 2019) regarding practice teaching and education.

The NOPT Code of Practice has been used by Practice Learning Providers, Practice Education Programmes, and by a number of practice education bodies in related health professions as a tool to measure, assess and develop good practice. Some agencies have adopted it as their own Code of Practice, and others are planning to use it as a standards framework for re- accrediting practice educators.

We believe that, whoever is our Regulator and whatever the particular educational framework may be from time to time, teaching and learning in practice will remain a crucial part of social work education, and we commend the Code of Practice to you.

We welcome comments or suggestions for constructive change to the Code of Practice, see contact details at the end of this document.

Anti-Oppressive/Anti-Discriminatory Statement

In promoting anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practice, practice educators and practice supervisors should:

- Take responsibility for their own learning through questioning their assumptions, values and prejudices and consider the effect of these on their own individual experience and practice.
- Acknowledge the power imbalance within the practice educator/student relationship and the potential for discrimination this creates.
- Encourage students to recognise and work towards minimising the effects of structural inequality and injustice.
- Demonstrate in their own practice the principles of anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practice.
- Enable students to identify, analyse and counter discrimination in a manner, which takes account of their role and context.
- Involve the service user in the development and assessment of the student's learning.

Code of Practice

NOPT, as an organisation, shares with its members a commitment to upholding high standards of professional conduct.

This Code of Practice is intended as a statement of the principles through which the role of the practice educator and the task of practice teaching is discharged. It reflects NOPT's aim to promote quality and consistency in practice teaching within an anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory framework. It has relevance to full-time, part-time, 'off-site' and singleton practice educators in the private, independent, voluntary and statutory sectors.

The Code is not intended to be regulatory but seeks to establish good practice and national quality standards to meet current needs within social work education. Practice educators work within agencies in a wide variety of social care settings which are regulated by: Social Work England Professional Standards, the Professional Capabilities Framework and the Knowledge and Skills Statements.

In subscribing to the Code, practice educators accept responsibility for maintaining personal standards and agree to work within the Code wherever possible, whilst continuing to uphold the value requirements explicit in the Social Work England Professional Standards; the Professional Capabilities Framework and to uphold the Professional Standards for Practice Educators (PEPS)

1. Preparation for Placement/Practice Learning Opportunities

- 1.1 Students should be invited to attend the work base for a pre-placement visit/interview prior to confirmation of the placement, in order that learning opportunities are identified and related to both the student's previous experience and intended learning outcomes.
- 1.2 Arrangements for accepting responsibility for a student should be confirmed at least a month before the placement is due to begin. Placements which begin late should only commence when the practice educator and the student have had adequate time to prepare.
- 1.3 Practice learning opportunities should be identified in advance and the practice educator and student need to agree that the learning objectives can be met.
- 1.4 The practice educator accepts responsibility for ensuring that an induction programme is organised and that prior to the student's arrival, work will have been selected to begin to meet their learning needs.
- 1.5 The practice educator or nominated other is responsible for preparing for the reception of the student and should be available on the first day of the placement.
- 1.6 The practice educator is responsible for ensuring students are provided with information about the agency, team and appropriate support mechanisms.

- 1.7 Reasonable adjustments should be made appropriate to the student's specific needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010

2. Practice Learning Agreement

- 2.1 The practice educator should ensure that a meeting is arranged prior to, or at the earliest opportunity within, the placement to establish the learning agreement.
- 2.2 The Practice Learning Agreement will identify student learning needs and learning objectives and the assessment plan by which the learning objectives will be assessed.
- 2.3 The Practice Learning Agreement will clearly indicate how the placement will enable the student to recognise diversity including race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender, transgender, faith and belief, apply anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice and how the student will be assessed in these areas.
- 2.4 The Practice Learning Agreement should clearly define the roles of all people involved in providing learning opportunities for the student e.g. the onsite or offsite practice educator role and the onsite practice supervisor role, where relevant.
- 2.5 The Practice Learning Agreement will identify alternative arrangements in the absence of the practice educator.
- 2.6 The Practice Learning Agreement will explicitly state how students can access support arrangements,

including any reasonable adjustments and disputes/complaints procedures.

2.(continued) Practice Learning Agreement

- 2.7 If there are areas of capability which cannot be tested because of a lack of learning opportunities within the placement setting, the practice educator will identify alternative strategies as to how they will be assessed.
- 2.8 The Practice Learning Agreement should be completed at the start of the placement and signed by the student and representatives of both agency and university, including the practice educator.
- 2.9 The Practice Learning Agreement should be a working document which is referred to regularly by both practice educator and student and modified by mutual agreement.
- 2.10 The Practice Learning Agreement should identify mechanisms to be used in case of difficulties, complaints, or where a student may be struggling.
- 2.11 Any modification of the Practice Learning Agreement is made explicit and recorded.

3. Teaching/Supervision

- 3.1 The practice educator should ensure that the student receives regular and dedicated supervision as stated by programme requirements. Good practice suggests

one and a half hours every five working days. This maybe alternated between the PE and onsite supervisor, where dual arrangement exists. It might also include some group reflective supervision arrangements that should not exceed 50 % of the placement period.

- 3.2 The practice educator should endeavour to provide a safe learning environment within which the student can learn.
- 3.3 Within supervision, agenda setting should be a shared responsibility, but the responsibility for managing supervision belongs to the practice educator.
- 3.4 The practice educator has the responsibility to ensure that the learning objectives are being addressed, as agreed in the practice learning agreement.
- 3.5 During the course of the placement, it is the responsibility of the practice educator to ensure provision and delivery of learning opportunities which allow the student to develop their knowledge and skills and explore social work values.
- 3.6 Supervision should be recorded, and the record signed and agreed by all parties.

4. Assessment

The practice educator should ensure that:

4.1 There is an agreed understanding about the purpose of assessment and about the methods by which the assessment of the Professional Capabilities Framework is carried out, according to the levels required by the social work programme.

4.2 The student is encouraged to fully contribute to the planning of the assessment process and the timescale within which the work will be assessed.

4.3 Supervision structures are in place which allow for regular reference to the assessment document without this becoming the main focus of supervision.

4.4 A range of evidence is used to demonstrate the student's capability. The range will establish that the evidence is valid, authentic, current and sufficient.

4.5 Issues about confidentiality and recording will be addressed within agency policies.

4.6 It is expected that, people with lived experience of services and/or carers will be enabled to take part in the assessment process.

4.7 Informed consent must be sought from any carers, children and adults who take part in any direct observation. They should fully understand the purpose of the activity and how the feedback will be used.

5. Managing Marginal/Failing Placements

5.1 The practice educator should highlight processes to be undertaken of how to address a struggling or failing placement at the beginning of the placement should the student be failing to meet the Professional Capabilities Framework or failing to abide by Social Work England Professional Standards.

5.2 The practice educator should share with the student any concern about the student's level of capability as it is identified and work openly with the student to reach agreement as to how capability might be achieved.

5.3 Where this is the case, the practice educator should examine her/his own practice and explore whether the concern might be based on any form of discrimination or if the student's learning is being impeded by any oppressive aspect of the placement.

5.4 If the student is at risk of failing the placement, the practice educator should encourage the student to seek an appropriate source of support.

5.5 The practice educator should utilise the practice learning support structures available to help facilitate the management of a marginal/failing placement and seek guidance as necessary.

5.6 The practice educator should work within the social work programme procedures.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 6.1 Quality Assurance Placement Learning feedback forms should be submitted by all parties in accordance with programme requirements.
- 6.2 Where systems are in place, practice educators should actively co-operate with the nominated agency person for practice education co-ordination to:
 - a) Contribute to an annual audit of practice education to provide information about their involvement in and availability for future practice teaching.
 - b) Notify that person of any change in role or work-base.
 - c) Participate in social work education programme stakeholder activities such as selection, assessment and partnership development.
 - d) Maintain appropriate records of time spent in practice learning activities.
 - e) Contribute to the collation of practice learning opportunity statistics required for Agency Performance Indicators, where relevant.

7. Professional Development

- 7.1 Practice teaching is an accountable, professional activity and practice educators should seek to review their needs annually.

7.2 Practice educators should maintain currency in line with the PEPS guidance (BASW 2020).

7.3 Practice educators should take responsibility for their own continuing professional development in line with Social Work England CPD standards and should record their Practice Education CPD accordingly.

Practice educators have an individual and collective responsibility to ensure that qualifying social workers are competent to practice.

This requires a rigorous assessment of capability and a willingness to contribute to the ongoing development of social work at a local and national level.

Contacts

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