

The period of learning in practice and the role of the designated prescribing practitioner (DPP)

Prescribing programmes

1 Programme aim

The University of Reading offer a variety of programmes for practitioners (also known as nurse independent prescribers in training) to obtain the relevant qualification to enable them to apply for annotation with their professional regulatory body as a prescriber. The part-time programmes have been developed in response to the Government initiative to extend prescribing rights to support patient-centred care. The programme aim is to prepare allied health professionals (AHPs), nurses and pharmacists to practice as prescribers and to meet the standards for independent prescribers set by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

Nurse independent prescribers in training (referred to as students in this document) enrolled on the programme are required to complete a set number of days of supervised learning in practice, working with their DPP, the following notes are to help potential DPPs understand the role to decide whether they are able to commit to supporting the student.

2 Designated prescribing practitioners (DPPs)

Designated prescribing practitioners (DPPs) are workplace-based supervisors who support students studying on a prescribing programme. The role is required by the regulatory bodies; the GPhC, HCPC and NMC. Since 2019 regulatory changes have enabled a range of healthcare professionals to also act as a DPP, a role that was previously only allowable for designated medical practitioners (DMPs).

Each regulator has chosen a different terminology for the role of the workplace-based supervisor and/or assessor in the context of prescribing programmes:

- GPhC - designated prescribing practitioner
- HCPC - practice educator
- NMC - practice supervisor and practice assessor (the responsibilities are split over two roles)

In recognition of the work undertaken by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to develop a national multi-professional competency framework our programme documentation will align to their terminology *designated prescribing practitioner* (DPP) when encompassing all the different regulator's programmes.

2.1 Who can take on the role of the practice assessor and practice supervisor?

Each student can only have one named practice assessor and one named practice supervisor. If you are interested in sharing either role with a colleague, then you are able to discuss this with the programme team. Whilst a formal agreement to share the responsibility may be possible, it should be noted that one named person must take the primary responsibility as the named individual. The core criteria for DPPs for allied health professionals, pharmacists and nurses (and thus practice assessors and practice supervisors) include the following:

- Be a registered healthcare professional with prescribing rights (this includes medical prescribers working as a general practitioner, specialist registrar or consultant, and annotated independent prescribers)
- Be able to demonstrate they meet all competencies within [The Competency Framework for all Prescribers](#)
- Be able to demonstrate they meet all the competencies within [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#). This ensures they are suitably experienced and qualified to carry out the role and can commit to the required time to support the student. (For more information see section 7.1 and 7.2). See also the DPP declaration (for practice assessors) and the practice supervisor declarations available on the CIPPET website.

2.2 What is the difference between the practice assessor and the practice supervisor?

The practice supervisor's role is to support and supervise the student in the workplace, ensuring they are provided with opportunities to develop their competence, including providing feedback and upholding public protection. The practice assessor's role is to objectively assess the student's competence in the workplace, working with the practice supervisor and programme team to make a recommendation for progression. Assessment of students is expected to be a continuous process through the workplace-based learning and to support this the practice assessor should maintain an up to date overview of the student's progress. Practice assessors are expected to also provide feedback to students to support them to develop their learning action plans. For more information you can see an overview of the roles on the NMC website.

2.3 Can my practice assessor and practice supervisor be the same person?

The practice assessor does not need to be in the same organisation as the applicant, but they need to be able to provide an assessment of performance in an appropriate setting.

The NMC recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances which mean the same person may have to fulfil the role of practice supervisor and practice assessor. In these rare cases, the applicant should discuss their application with the admissions tutor. Where it is deemed appropriate to consider having the same person, the Programme Director and/or Director of CIPPET must approve the request. It will be necessary to evidence why it was required and what mitigations are to be put in place so this can be scrutinised to ensure quality assurance processes are followed. Exceptional additional support arrangements may be made, such as distance-based support from another practice supervisor and/or increased input in the workplace from the programme team. For example where the barrier to having a separate practice assessor and practice supervisor is that one of the named individuals does not meet all the competencies within [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#) (see section 2.1) the programme team may be able to provide specific support for that individual to act as the practice supervisor.

3 Period of supervised learning in practice

The period of learning in practice is time spent in a clinical setting, under the supervision of the practice supervisor, practice assessor and other supervisors, putting academic theoretical learning into practice.

3.1 How long is the period of supervised learning in practice?

The University based elements of the programme run over six months but the supervised learning in practice can be studied over up to ten months depending on the individual student's learning needs in the workplace. The student will be required to do a minimum number of 78 hours in the workplace.

3.2 How much time do they need to spend with their DPP?

Students do not have to undertake all the hours with their practice supervisor and practice assessor, and they are encouraged to collaboratively identify opportunities to spend time with healthcare professionals from across the multi-disciplinary team which will help them to meet their learning needs. All supervisors will need to sign a log of hours of the time spent with the student. This programme usually requires that the DPP (in this case the practice supervisor and practice assessor's hours combined) spend a third to a half of the learning in practice hours with the student to ensure they can make a holistic judgement on the student's competence and confidence.

3.3 What does the period of supervised learning in practice involve?

Learning in practice will be related to the clinical conditions and circumstances in which the student is going to use their prescribing skills. At the start of the process students will agree with their practice assessor a learning contract to explore their learning needs and agree a timeline of workplace-based learning activities and experiences. This will be different for each student, reflecting their differing baseline clinical skills and experience. The University will provide guidance to assist with this process. The practice supervisor and practice assessor

should ensure that over time the student progresses from observing, to participating and/or leading aspects of patient care.

3.4 What constitutes supervision during the learning in practice period?

The supervised learning in practice should be predominantly patient facing although the following are some suggestions of the range of activities that can be undertaken:

- Dedicated time and opportunities for the student to observe how they conduct a consultation with patients and/or carers, and how the subsequent management plan is developed
- Opportunities to allow in-depth discussion and analysis of clinical management using a focused and/or random case analysis approach, when patient care and prescribing behaviour can be examined further
- Facilitation of learning by encouraging critical thinking and reflection using the student's professional portfolio and/or learning log
- Opportunities for the student to carry out consultations, or parts of consultations, and suggest clinical management and prescribing options, which are then discussed and analysed
- Observation of the student's abilities to consult and communicate, physically examine and monitor, and prescribe in accordance with a clinical management plan

4 Is there any paperwork involved for the DPP during the programme?

Planning the learning in practice: Practice assessors are required to complete a learning contract with the student mapped to [The Competency Framework for all Prescribers](#) to plan the period of supervised learning in practice period. In addition, they should review the student's draft practice placement profile to support the learning contract.

During the programme: Practice assessors will need to complete up to two mandatory workplace-based assessments with their student to formatively assess their progress. In addition, at review meetings they can update the competency framework to indicate where competencies have been met. Students can discuss their academic work with their practice assessor and/or practice supervisor to support a holistic view of their progress but there is no mandatory requirement to do so; DPPs (and thus practice assessors and practice supervisors) are not required to mark academic essays. Practice supervisors and practice assessors need to complete a formal assessment of progress at around month five for submission to the University.

Completion of the programme: the practice assessor will be required to provide a final sign-off of competence.

5 What support is available for DPPs?

All DPPs, including both practice supervisors and practice assessors, need to undertake induction training for the programme, if you have been a DPP before this will usually take the form of update training to contextualise the University of Reading programme. This training will usually be provided online.

A DPP handbook containing detailed information on the programme and the role you are undertaking will also be provided. The programme team are available to discuss any issues around the period of learning in practice and the student's progress throughout the programme. The programme team can make visits to the workplace to monitor student's learning and can also re-attend when required. Further information on supporting students and raising concerns is provided in the DPP handbook.

6 What are the benefits for the DPP in undertaking the role?

The following have been identified as some of the benefits for the DPP undertaking the role:

- Improved understanding of the contribution of different healthcare professionals in the multidisciplinary team
- Improved understanding of the role of training, supervision, mentoring, coaching, feedback and assessment in the workplace
- Opportunity to review workflow within the multidisciplinary team to better design the patient journey

- Opportunity to consider, review and reduce risks in healthcare
- Improved role modelling of good prescribing behaviours
- Focused CPD that can contribute to revalidation (once the student's results are ratified, DPPs will receive feedback, and are able to request a certificate stating they have undertaken the role, which they can include as part of their revalidation)

The following have been identified as some of the benefits for patients of utilising non-medical prescribers:

- Patients are provided with quicker, more efficient access to medicines
- Workloads are spread across a range of healthcare professionals in the multidisciplinary team
- Skill mix and resource use is optimised multidisciplinary team
- Cross discipline, sector and profession working is increased

7 Application process and the DPP

You will need to complete a declaration form as part of the student's application process which indicates how you meet the criteria required to take on the role. As part of the application process the admissions tutor will review this declaration, and any accompanying evidence, to identify if further information is required for the proposed DPP to be approved. The declaration focuses on your knowledge, skills and experience, and also collects information on the proposed learning setup, including governance and partnerships. The DPP declaration is available on our website and/or from the student applying to the programme.

For nurse applicants there is a declaration for the practice assessor and the practice supervisor, therefore two declarations from two different named individuals need to be submitted.

7.1 Demonstrating you meet the criteria to become a DPP

If you have been a DPP with the University of Reading before then you may not need to provide further information. If you have been a DPP for a student at another University, you can provide evidence of this role and the training you undertook with your declaration. Equally, if you are a doctor who is a trainer recognised by the GMC, have completed NMC mapped practice assessor training or are a trained University of Reading (or equivalent organisation) Foundation Programme Educational Supervisor this usually provides evidence of many of the core competencies for the role. It should be noted that the admissions tutor may contact you to provide supplementary evidence that you meet the competencies within [The Competency Framework for all Prescribers](#) and [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#). The flowchart of what evidence you need to provide is included on page 2 of the DPP declaration form.

7.2 Further information that may be required to support the application

In line with the core competencies of [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#), DPPs are required to have appropriate knowledge, skills, behaviours and experience in supporting students in workplace-based learning. If you are required to provide further information on your competence to undertake the role, the following are common examples you could provide;

- Submitted curriculum vitae mapped to [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#)
- Evidence of work submitted for an educational qualification (e.g. PGCert healthcare/clinical education) or credentialing (e.g. HEA fellowship), mapped to [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#) to show its relevance to the workplace-based learning element of this programme
- Professional development portfolio mapped to [The Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#), possible entries in the portfolio could include:
 - Evidence of contributing to clinical care, such as policies, guidelines etc. developed
 - Revalidation entries including reflection and CPD
 - Feedback from others e.g. peers or students
 - Certificates of attendance or completion
 - Anonymised cases
 - Peer review of practice or teaching

- Evidence of successful support of students through programmes of study
- Professional conversation with a member of the programme team to demonstrate understanding (this would normally need to be accompanied by other evidence)

If you cannot provide evidence, then you are able to enrol to complete equivalent training with the University of Reading during the induction period for the programme.

8 Further questions?

We encourage students interested in applying for the programme to discuss the practice assessor or practice supervisor role with potential individuals openly and address questions to the programme team to consider in partnership. If you have further questions about the role that you do not wish to discuss initially with the student, you should address them to the admissions tutor for the prescribing programme via cippet@reading.ac.uk.