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

Prescribing programme for nurses

1 Programme aim

The University of Reading offer a variety of programmes for practitioners 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, nurses and pharmacists to practice as prescribers and to meet the standards for independent prescribers set by the GPhC, HCPC or NMC.

Practitioners 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 applicant.

2 Designated prescribing practitioners (DPPs)

Designated prescribing practitioners (DPPs) are workplace-based supervisors who support practitioners studying on a prescribing programme. The role is required by the regulatory bodies; the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (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 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 DPP?

The core criteria for DPPs for allied health professionals, pharmacists and nurses include the following. For nurse applications these criteria apply to the practice assessor role.

- Be a registered healthcare professional
- Demonstrate a commitment to CPD relevant to the role as a practice assessor
- Understand the role of The Prescribing Competency Framework for all Prescribers
- Understand the role of The Prescribing Competency Framework for DPPs and undertake self-assessment of the core competencies (due for publication in Nov 2019)
- Be suitably experienced and qualified to carry out the role as a practice assessor with respect to workplace-based training
  - Have supervised other healthcare professionals on workplace-based programmes (it is not essential to have acted as a DPP before)
The role of the designated prescribing practitioner (DPP)

- Demonstrate prior experience of the role of feedback, assessment, supervision and raising concerns in the workplace, or agree to undertake University provided training face to face or via online learning
- Commit to undertaking induction training face to face or via online learning
- Be suitably experienced and qualified to carry out the role as a practice assessor with respect to the applicant’s stated scope of practice:
  - Have active prescribing competence in the scope of practice
  - Be an experienced prescriber in the scope of practice (usually at least three year’s prescribing experience)
  - Have appropriate patient-facing clinical and diagnostic skills relevant to the scope of practice
- Be able to commit to the time required to support the applicant, including agreement from the DPP’s organisation to undertake the role

In addition, the NMC require that two healthcare professionals take the role of supervising students. The following are the criteria to be a practice supervisor:

- Be a registered healthcare professional
- Demonstrate a commitment to CPD relevant to the role as a DPP
- Understand the role of *The Prescribing Competency Framework for all Prescribers*
- Understand the role of *The Prescribing Competency Framework for DPPs* and undertake self-assessment of the core competencies (due for publication in Nov 2019)
- Be suitably experienced and qualified to carry out the role as a practice supervisor with respect to workplace-based supervision:
  - Demonstrate prior experience of the role of feedback, assessment, supervision and raising concerns in the workplace, or agree to undertake University provided training face to face or via online learning
  - Commit to undertaking induction training face to face or via online learning
- Be suitably experienced and qualified to carry out the role as a DPP with respect to the applicant’s stated scope of practice:
  - Have active prescribing competence in the scope of practice
  - Be an experienced prescriber in the scope of practice (usually at least one year’s prescribing experience)
  - Have appropriate patient-facing clinical knowledge and skills relevant to the scope of practice
  - Have appropriate patient-facing diagnostic skills relevant to the scope of practice, or a commitment to arrange sufficient time with other supervisors to support the student to develop the relevant skills
- Be able to commit to the time required to support the applicant, including agreement from the DPPs organisation to undertake the role

### 2.2 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. If one person is to act in both roles, they must meet the criteria to be a practice assessor. 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.
3 When does the period of learning in practice have to take place?

The period of learning in practice is time spent in a clinical setting, under the supervision of the DPP (practice supervisor and practice assessor), putting academic learning into 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 students learning needs in the workplace.

3.1 How long is the period of learning in practice?

The applicant will be required to do a minimum number of hours in the workplace as follows:

- Allied health professionals and nurses: 78 hours
- Pharmacists: 90 hours

Applicants do not have to undertake all the hours with their DPP, 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. This programme requires that the DPP (in this case practice supervisor) usually spends 50% of the learning in practice hours with the practitioner. For those taking on a practice assessor role they would be expected to spend time overseeing the learning contract, gathering feedback and making objective evidence-based assessments of competence which would usually account for a small proportion of the 50%.

3.2 What does the period of learning in practice involve?

Learning in practice will be related to the clinical conditions and circumstances in which the applicant is going to use their prescribing skills. At the start of the process students will agree with their DPP a learning contract to explore learning needs and agree a timeline and programme of workplace-based learning. This will be different for each student, reflecting their differing baseline clinical skills and experience. The University will provide guidelines to assist with this process. The DPP should ensure that overtime the applicant progresses from observing, to participating and/or leading aspects of patient care.

3.3 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 applicant 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 practitioner learning by encouraging critical thinking and reflection using the practitioner’s professional portfolio or learning log
- Opportunities for the practitioner to carry out consultations, or parts of consultations, and suggest clinical management and prescribing options, which are then discussed and analysed
- Observation of the practitioner’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?

Application: All potential DPPs are required to complete a declaration form as part of the practitioner’s application process which indicates how they meet the criteria required to take on the role.

Planning the learning in practice: DPPs are required to complete a learning contract with the applicant mapped to The Prescribing Competency Framework for all Prescribers to plan the learning in practice experience. In addition, they should review the applicant’s draft practice placement audit to support the learning contract process. The practice assessor and/or practice supervisor can lead on the learning contract planning meeting.
During the programme: All supervisors will need to sign a log of hours of the time spent with the applicant. Students will need to complete a set number of workplace-based assessments with the DPP to formatively assess their progress during the course, in addition at review meetings they can update the competency framework to indicate where competencies have been met; these are both requirements of the practice assessor for nursing applicants. The University recommends that applicants discuss elements of their academic work with their DPP to support a holistic view of their progress but there is no mandatory requirement to do so; DPPs are not required to mark academic essays.

Completion of the programme: the DPP will be required to provide a final sign-off of competence which forms a mandatory part of the final assessment process. This is a role for the practice assessor for nursing applicants.

5 What support is available for DPPs?

DPPs do not need to have additional training if they have previous experience and learning that shows how they meet regulatory requirements; therefore, further training via face to face or distance learning, may be optional or mandatory as determined by the admissions tutor.

All DPPs need to attend induction training for the programme.

A DPP handbook containing detailed information on the programme and the role will be provided. The programme team are also available to discuss any issues around the period of learning in practice and the applicant’s progress throughout the programme. Professional lead tutors 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 benefits for patients:

- 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

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

- 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 applicant’s results are ratified, DPPs are able to request a certificate stating they have undertaken the role which they can include as part of their revalidation)

7 Further questions?

We encourage applicants to discuss the DPP role with potential supervisor(s) 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 applicant, you should address them to the admissions tutor for the prescribing programme via cippet@reading.ac.uk.