

PRESCRIBING PROGRAMME FOR NURSES AND PHARMACISTS

The period of learning in practice and the role of the Designated Medical Practitioner (DMP)

Programme aim and outcomes

The University of Reading offer a variety of programmes for practitioners to obtain the relevant qualification to enable them to apply for registration with their professional body as prescribers. The part-time programmes have been developed in response to the Government initiative to extend prescribing. The aim is to prepare nurses and pharmacists to practice as prescribers and to meet the standards for independent prescribers set by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).

Practitioners on the programme are required to complete at least 12 days of supervised practice, known as the period of learning in practice. The following notes are to help potential DMPs in this aspect of the programme.

Who can take on the role of the supervisor?

The designated medical practitioner (DMP) who takes on the supervisory role needs to meet the following criteria, laid down by the Department of Health (DH)

- be a registered medical practitioner who has had at least 3 years medical, treatment and prescribing responsibility for a group of patient/clients in the relevant field of practice
- be within a GP practice and either vocationally trained or in possession of a certificate of equivalent experience from the Joint or Post-Graduate Training in General Practice **OR** be a specialist registrar, clinical assistant or a consultant within a NHS Trust or other NHS employer
- have the support of the employing organisation or GP practice to act as the designated medical practitioner who will provide supervision, support and opportunities to develop competence in prescribing practice
- have some experience or training in teaching and/or supervision in practice

When does the period of learning in practice have to take place?

The programme runs over six months, during which time the equivalent of 12 days of learning in practice should be agreed between the practitioner and the DMP.

What is involved in learning in practice?

Learning in practice will be related to the medical conditions and circumstances in which a practitioner is going to use their prescribing skills. At the start of the process the practitioner and the DMP are required to draw up a learning contract whereby the practitioner and the DMP explore learning needs and agree a programme of learning. This will be different for each practitioner, reflecting the differing clinical skills and experience of each practitioner. The University will provide guidelines to assist with this process.

Is there any paperwork involved for the DMP?

DMPs are required to complete a form as part of the practitioner's application process which indicates that they meet the criteria required by the Department of Health. In addition the University requires the practitioner and the DMP to undertake a placement profile of the education and training facilities that can be provided. A

template for the profile is provided which should be returned to the University. During the period of learning in practice the DMP is required to sign against the evidence that the practitioner provides in their portfolio to verify that progress is being made. At the end of the learning period the DMP will be asked to make an assessment of the practitioner which will then go to the University and become part of the overall practitioner assessment. The practitioner must pass the learning in practice assessment in order to become accredited as a prescriber.

What constitutes supervision during the learning in practice period?

The following are some suggestions. The DMP can provide:

- Dedicated time and opportunities for the nurse or pharmacist to observe how the medical practitioner conducts a consultation/interview with patients and/or their carers, and how the subsequent management plan is developed.
- Opportunities to allow in-depth discussion and analysis of clinical management using a 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 and suggest clinical management and prescribing options, which are then discussed with the supervisor.
- Observation of the practitioner's abilities to consult and communicate, physically examine (as relevant) and monitor, and prescribe in accordance with a clinical management plan.

What support is available for the DMP?

A DMP handbook containing information from the Programme Handbook and Practitioner Portfolio is provided. The programme team are also available to discuss any issues around the period of learning in practice and the practitioner's progress. Programme tutors can also make visits to DMPs and practitioners when required.

What are the benefits for the DMP in undertaking the role?

The following have been identified as the benefits of prescribing by nurses and pharmacists, for the DMP and their patients:

- Patients are provided with quicker, more efficient access to medicines
- Doctors' workloads are reduced
- Skill mix and resource use is optimised in the NHS
- Multidisciplinary team working is increased

Following the publication of the programme results DMPs are able to request a certificate stating they have undertaken the role which they can include as part of their revalidation.

Further questions?

Enquiries from DMPs about the programme should be made to the prescribing programme director:

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