

Education Seminars 2012–13 – Practice placements

Case study one

Due to changes at an education providers' main practice placement areas the majority of experienced practice placement educators have retired or moved to another area. The programme team have been very successful in recruiting new practice placement educators by utilising their network of alumni and utilising the less experienced staff at the existing practice placements.

In line with the education provider's policy, all new supervisors have undergone the training session by completing it via distance learning. However, the education provider has changed its policy for all practice placement educators to be at least 3 years post qualification. Now some new supervisors are only 1 year post qualification. Where this has occurred the education provider has asked that these supervisors are assisted by senior colleagues, if possible.

A secondary result of the staffing cuts has been that the education provider has had to reduce the amount of practice hours undertaken by students. This has brought them under the number of hours recommended by the relevant professional body. However, the education provider has amended the learning outcomes associated with the practice placement experience and has ensured that all of the relevant standards of proficiency can be met. Where this is not possible in placement the programme team will supervise students on an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE).

1. What risks do you think may be associated with the practice placements in this situation?
2. How do you think the HCPC standards of education and training (SETs) would minimise these risks? What, if any, further evidence do you think the HCPC would require to be sure that the programme continues to meet the SETs?

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Case study two

An education provider has in the past had regular collaborative meetings with its partner placement providers. However, through annual monitoring, it has become clear that in the last two years no such meetings have been taken place. This is because of a lack of staff from the placement providers available to attend these meetings.

As a result the education providers' new placement model has been implemented without a formal consultation having been undertaken with the practice placement providers and educators. However, the education provider has developed a new practice placement educator handbook and updated the training on offer to the educators. This information has been disseminated amongst all current practice placement educators to inform them of the changes.

A significant change to the assessment of students while on practice placement is the requirement for students to do an original piece of research based on their practice placement experience. Students have been encouraged to use their experiences to inform their reading around their chosen subject and to support any outcomes of this research.

1. What risks do you think may be associated with the practice placements in this situation?
2. How do you think the HCPC standards of education and training (SETs) would minimise these risks? What, if any, further evidence do you think the HCPC would require to be sure that the programme continues to meet the SETs?

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Case study three

As a result of consistently poor feedback from students about their practice placements, an education provider has decided to alter the way students undertake their placement experience. The main area of criticism was that students felt they were expected to act as professionals as soon as they arrived and were often treated simply as ‘another pair of hands’ throughout their time on placement. This led to many students getting consistently low marks as they went out on placement after the first three weeks and were often unsure of what they should be doing. Further criticism was that the practice placement educators simply did not know what their role was in regards to the students.

Instead of 2 ‘long blocks’ of placement experience, lasting 8 weeks each, the programme team have decided that students will now take 4 small ‘blocks’ lasting three weeks each interspersed with the academic sessions. These smaller blocks will allow students to ‘rotate’ more amongst the placements that the programme team have in their database. The programme team also feel that this format allows them to take on the pastoral role in the placement setting negating the need for practice placement educators to do this.

1. What risks do you think may be associated with the practice placements in this situation?
2. How do you think the HCPC standards of education and training (SETs) would minimise these risks? What, if any, further evidence do you think the HCPC would require to be sure that the programme continues to meet the SETs?