

DENTAL HYGIENE & THERAPY PLACEMENTS QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

1. Introduction and Purpose:

This policy outlines the quality assurance framework for Dental Hygiene & Therapy placement learning within the University of Essex. It emphasises the importance of placement learning experiences for student development and adheres to the regulatory frameworks set by the General Dental Council (GDC), Care Quality Commission (CQC) and The Office for Students (OfS).

2. Definitions:

- **Clinical Placement learning:** The practical experience students gain in a professional healthcare setting outside the University of Essex.
- **Placement provider:** The organisation, such as a primary care dental practice, that offers placement opportunities for students.
- **Clinical educator:** The individual responsible for supervising and mentoring students on placement and is overall responsible for patient care.
- **Student:** An individual enrolled in University of Essex, Dental Hygiene & Therapy programmes, at the University of Essex that includes a placement learning component.
- **Quality assurance:** The ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of placement learning experiences.

3. Roles and Responsibilities:

- **The University of Essex:**
 - Provide and adhere to responsibilities agreed to in the **Placement Agreement**
 - Overall responsibility for quality assurance of placement learning.
 - Provides support and guidance to students and placement providers.
 - Develops and maintains relationships with placement providers.
 - Oversees the placement approval and monitoring process.

- Conducts regular monitoring and evaluation of clinical placement experiences.
- **Placement Lead:**
 - Responsible for the academic aspects of clinical placements within their programs
 - Oversee the placement learning experience for students in their programme.
 - Liaise with clinical placement providers to ensure alignment with learning objectives.
 - Support students in preparing for and reflecting on placement experiences.
- **Placement Providers:**
 - Provide and adhere to responsibilities agreed to in the **Placement Agreement**
 - Provide safe and supportive learning environments for students.
 - Provide opportunities for students to develop relevant clinical skills and knowledge.
 - Assign qualified clinical educators to supervise and mentor students.
 - Provide feedback on student performance and progress.
 - Provide **immediate** alerts in concerns related to patient safety.
- **Clinical Educators:**
 - Provide and adhere to responsibilities agreed to in the **Placement Agreement**
 - Supervise and mentor students throughout their placement.
 - Deliver learning experiences aligned with programme objectives.
 - Assess student performance according to agreed criteria.
 - Communicate regularly with placement lead, programme lead or personal tutors.
 - Provide **immediate** alerts in concerns related to patient safety.
- **Students:**
 - Provide and adhere to responsibilities agreed to in the **Student Placement Declaration**
 - Actively participate in their placement learning experience.
 - Complete assigned learning activities and tasks diligently.
 - Adhere to placement provider policies and procedures.

- Maintain professional conduct throughout the placement.
- Provide **immediate** alerts in concerns related to patient safety.
- Seek guidance and feedback from clinical educators.

4. Quality Assurance Process

4.1 Placement Identification and Approval:

- The University of Essex maintains a list of approved placement providers that meet pre-defined quality standards.
- Criteria for selecting placement providers include:
 - New clinical placement providers undergo a rigorous approval process that includes initial inspection, reference checks, and assessment of learning opportunities aligned with programme needs
 - **Initial inspection** demonstrating compliance and alignment with the requirements and principles outlined in the **Placement Agreement**
 - **Training and induction** of each clinical educator completion as provided by the University, demonstrating compliance and alignment to the **Placement Agreement**.
 - Suitability of the learning environment for student needs.
 - Availability of qualified and experienced clinical educators, in adherence to the **Placement Agreement**.
 - Adherence to **governance-relevant** health and safety regulations, as expected of a primary care dental practice, including providing data and evidence to demonstrate adherence, including submission of a signed **Placement Agreement** from the Placement Provider/Owner and each Clinical Educator.
- The University conducts regular **monitoring inspections** to approved placement providers to ensure they continue to meet quality standards and offer safe learning environments.

4.2 Selection and Allocation:

- Students are matched with placements based on:
 - Availability of suitable placements

- Occupational health reasonable adjustments, where appropriate
- A transparent and fair allocation process is followed.

4.3 Induction and Support:

- The University provides comprehensive induction programmes for students and clinical educators. This training address:
 - Clinical placement expectations, policies, and procedures.
 - Effective supervision and mentorship strategies.
 - Patient safety, communication, and professional conduct.
 - Specific learning objectives and assessment methods for each placement.
- Students receive an induction programme on the first day commencing their placement.
- The induction covers placement expectations, health and safety procedures, and professional conduct, as guided by the **Placement Learning Agreement and Induction Checklist**.
- Ongoing support mechanisms are available for both students, personal tutors, and clinical educators throughout the placement. This may include regular meetings, communication channels, workshops, or online resources.

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

- The quality of placement learning is monitored through various methods:
 - Student feedback surveys and interviews.
 - Clinical educator feedback surveys, and interviews.
 - Placement lead/tutor visits/inspections to placements.
 - Monitoring of student performance and achievement of learning objectives through clinical assessments and evaluations
 - Review of incident reports and patient care documentation
- The University utilises the collected data to identify areas of strength, areas for improvement, and potential curriculum revisions.
- Regular meetings and communication are conducted between the University and placement providers to discuss student progress and address any concerns. This includes both informal regular interactions and formalised bi-annual **Clinical Educator Days**.

5. Standards and Expectations:

5.1 Standards for Placement Providers:

- Adhere to the agreed **Placement Agreement**
- Compliance with relevant healthcare regulations and patient safety standards.
- Availability of qualified and experienced clinical educators with appropriate mentoring skills.
- Sufficient patient population and variety of cases to meet student learning needs.
- Provide adequate resources and facilities for student learning.
- Offer a variety of learning experiences relevant to the programme.
- Ensure a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment for students that fosters student development.
- Assign qualified and experienced clinical educators.
- Establish clear policies and procedures for student placements.
- Availability of qualified and experienced clinical educators/preceptors with appropriate mentoring skills.
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5.2 Standards for Clinical Educators:

- Adhere to the agreed **Placement Agreement**
- Possess the necessary GDC qualifications and experience to supervise students.
- Strong clinical skills and knowledge and maintain own professional development
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Provide clear learning objectives and expectations for students.
- Ability to provide constructive feedback and guidance to students on their clinical skills and professional development.
- Awareness of relevant ethical and legal considerations in healthcare practice.
- Assess student performance according to agreed criteria.

- Maintain regular communication with the placement lead, programme lead, and personal tutors.

5.3 Standards for Students:

- Adhere to the agreed **Placement Student Declaration**
- Adhere to university policies and procedures
- Commitment to patient safety and upholding professional standards.
- Demonstrate a professional and responsible attitude and behaviour throughout the placement.
- Arrive at placement on time and prepared to learn and work.
- Actively participate in learning activities and tasks.
- Complete assigned work to a satisfactory standard.
- Maintain confidentiality of any sensitive information encountered during the placement.
- Effective communication with patients, clinical educators, and other members of the practice team.
- Willingness to learn and demonstrate progress in developing clinical skills.
- Seek clarification and guidance when needed.

6. Complaints and Concerns Procedure:

The institution has a clear and accessible procedure for addressing any complaints or concerns related to placement learning. This procedure outlines the steps individuals can take to raise an issue and how the institution will investigate and resolve it.

7. Review and Revision:

This policy will be reviewed and revised regularly, annually, to ensure it remains current and reflects best practices in placement learning quality assurance.

Stakeholders, including students, Clinical educators, Placement lead, programme leads, and personal tutors, will be consulted during the review process.

The next review is due September 2024