**The role of the Academic Assessor and the Link Lecturer in supporting Learners in Clinical Practice in in the Leeds clinical placement circuit**

**Academic Assessors**

The NMC’s 2018 Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA) clearly set out the expectations for Academic Assessors (AA).

In Leeds – if there is an individual student concern, the first port of call is the student’s AA. Contact details for the AA are available in the student’s MYEPAD and via the student’s individual placement unit. While each clinical area also has a Link Lecturer (LL), they may be from another Institution, and the AA is the most appropriate person for practice to get in touch with. Each student will also have an Academic Personal Tutor (University of Leeds) or an Academic Advisor (Leeds Beckett University), and if necessary, the AA will liaise with them for Pastoral support of the student.

According to the SSSA, the AA should be made aware of any issues or concerns regarding students in practice. This includes any concerns that may have been raised in the practice environment or by practice assessors and supervisors. Students also contact AAs if they have concerns regarding practice and their placements.

Once the AA has been made aware of performance concerns or concerns affecting progress on placement, they will establish what support has been implemented or is required. For example, they may have a role to play in developing, and in making recommendations for an action plan for a student who is struggling to achieve their programme outcomes. What role the AA might play in this process will depend on several different factors, such as the student’s stage of learning, and the AAs involvement in it, and any policies or procedures within their HEI for improving student performance. They will also likely involve the Trust or clinical area’s PLF or Educator if there is someone is this role, to add additional support.

If a student has not met the required actions in the action plan and it becomes apparent that they will not improve, the AA should take any appropriate action, which may include supporting the decision / recommending the student be failed on that part of the programme, or that they do not progress (see section on [**assessment for progression**](https://www.nmc.org.uk/supporting-information-on-standards-for-student-supervision-and-assessment/academic-assessment/what-do-academic-assessors-do/assessment-for-progression/)). This should be done through discussion with the nominated practice assessor, following any academic processes set in place by the AEI and their practice learning partners’. If the student is not receiving the support that they require to meet their learning outcomes, this will be escalated once more to the PLF or nominated person in the clinical area.

If PAs have concerns regarding students’ ability to pass an assessed placement or to meet their action plan, the AA should be made aware as soon as possible to ensure that they are able to support the student. Attendance at Mid-Point interviews may be appropriate, and if students are likely to fail an assessed placement despite appropriate support measures being put in place, the AA should be in attendance at the final interview. If any element of the Professional Values in Practice are not met at Mid-point – the AA should be informed, and an Action Plan needs to be implemented.

The AA reviews all students practice documentation and signs this off alongside the Practice Supervisor and Practice Assessor as part of the tripartite assessment.

**Link Lecturers**

The Link Lecturer (LL) role is a QA role and primarily a long arm one. LLs are allocated from University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University and Open University to clusters of clinical areas in the community acute and Private and Voluntary (PIVO) settings. They may be called upon to liaise with the clinical area if there are practice concerns, such as escalation of concerns by students, or requests to change capacity. In addition, LLs review all placement evaluations and follow up on evaluations that are problematic, triangulating poor student evaluations students from their HEI with more qualitative feedback and following this up with the PLFs, who implement Action Plans in the clinical areas. Because they are from different HEIs they cannot respond to individual student concerns, rather, these issues have to be directed to that student’s own institution, for confidentiality reasons.

While previously LLs may have been aligned to the areas that they had expertise in, this is now less common, as there are growing numbers of clinical areas to cover, as well as a large volume of academic staff and high staff turnover. Rather, LLs expertise lies in Nursing Education and the practice requirements in the curriculum. LLs complete Educational Audits of their Link wards via the PARE system every two years, as part of the Health Education England requirement to enable the clinical area to continue as a clinical placement for students and would also complete ad hoc audits should issues arise in the interim. Their details are available in the PARE system. As per HEE and PARE guidance, these can be conducted face to face or remotely, and the PLF or similar may choose to attend. Link Lecturer areas are allocated by the PPU at University of Leeds and before a new placement area is onboarded, an Educational Audit needs to be completed.

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