

Process for practice staff to escalate concerns regarding students in health and social care placements in the Faculty of Health Sciences (Nursing (all fields), including apprenticeships, Specialist Community Practice and Trainee Nursing Associates, Paramedics and ODPs)

Introduction

The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at The University of Hull will ensure that their graduates are of the highest standards and fit to care for patients and service users. While most students on professional healthcare programmes successfully complete their practice placements, there are occasions where students are not making expected progress, or there are concerns regarding their health and/or wellbeing, or there are concerns about their conduct.

This document provides an overview of the steps to be taken in practice and by the FHS to develop the necessary action plans to support a student's achievement, or provide health and wellbeing support, or to investigate allegations in respect of a student's conduct.

Definition of a Placement Supervisor: this refers to all trainers/supervisors/coordinators/mentors/educators/assessors who are appropriately qualified/suitably prepared to support learners. In the practice placement, learners are provided with a named member of staff who will oversee their learning on placement and is usually responsible for the assessment of the learner's practice. The title of this person varies according to each profession and as such we have used a generic term of placement supervisor.

Key staff

The staff most closely involved in the raising and management of concerns are:

- Placement Supervisors and other clinical staff within the placement area.
- Practice Support Staff (Practice Learning Facilitators (PLFs), Clinical Skills Tutors (CSTs), Practice Development Nurses (PDNs), Clinical Practice Educators (CPEs) and Practice Education Facilitators (PEF)). In most cases, the practice support staff would be the main organisational point of contact for student issues.
- Line Manager (where the student is an employee/apprentice)

- Academic Assessors (AA)
- Link Lecturers (LL)
- Academic Support Tutors (ASTs) Programme Directors
- Professional Leads (Lead Midwife for Education, Academic Lead for Nursing Programmes)
- Academic Lead for Placement Learning

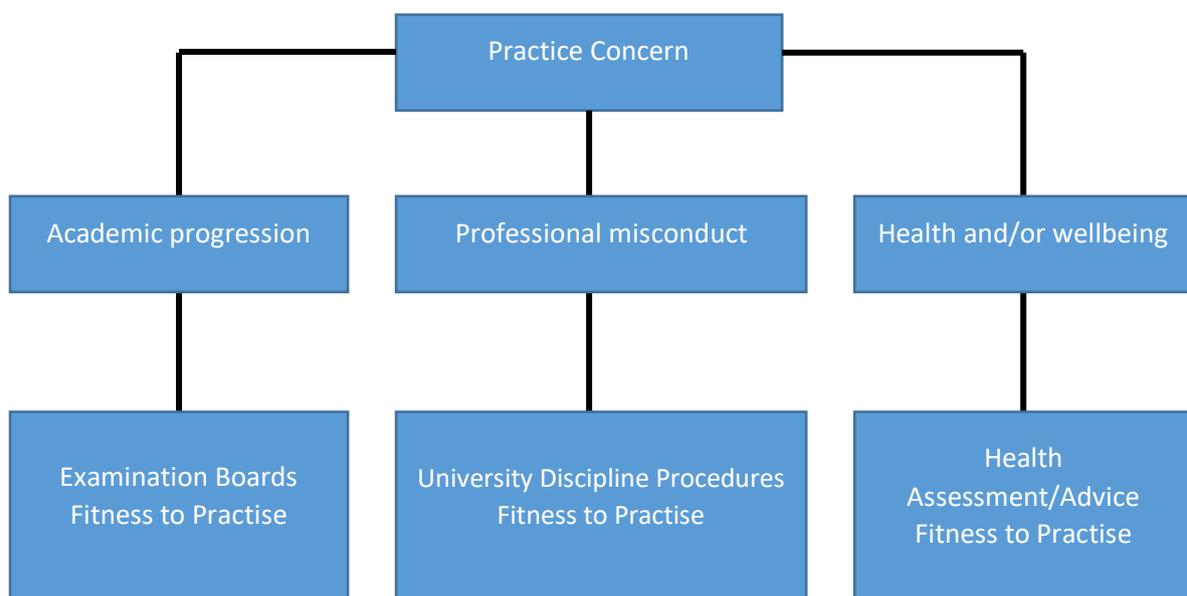
Scope of the guidance

Though it is not possible to outline every circumstance in which concerns may need to be escalated by practice to the FHS, there are three broad categories encompassed by this guidance. These categories are:

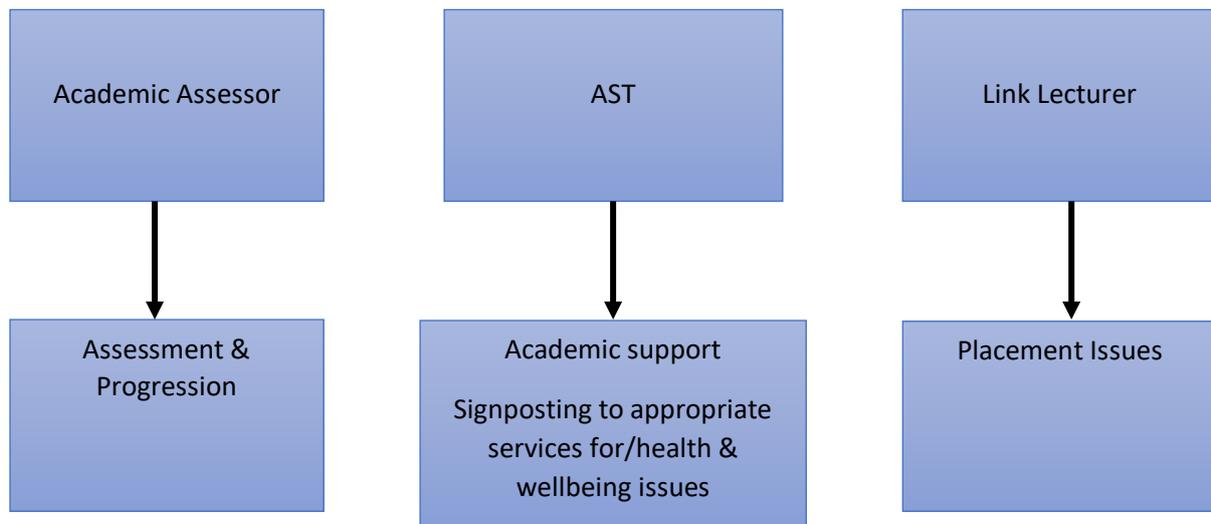
- Students who do not appear to have the required knowledge, skills and professional attitude and so are at risk of not achieving the elements required to pass the placement.
- Students whose conduct may be considered as either professional misconduct or professional unsuitability.
- Students whose health and wellbeing and/or fitness to practise is a cause for concern for practice staff.

Process for escalating concerns

Processes will vary according to the nature of the concern and action will be taken using one or more of the three procedures below in conjunction with the Escalating Concerns Regarding Nursing Students in Health and Social Care Placements in the FHS Flow Diagram on page 9:



The following outlines the reporting streams for each of the Faculty roles and depending on the nature of the concern who is broadly responsible; however FHS staff will liaise and where appropriate work together with practice to ensure a joined-up Faculty response to any concerns:



Anyone concerned about the behaviour, health and/or professional conduct of a student has the right to raise their concern. The process for escalating concerns is summarised in the accompanying flow diagram on page 9 of this document. In general, concerns of placement supervisors and other staff from placement areas should first be directed to the relevant Practice Support Staff for their organisation (see **Key Staff** list above). The first points of contact for practice staff to escalate concerns about students within the Faculty are Link Lecturers. Appendix 1 shows the Placement Resolution Protocol for Practice Concerns which should be followed in the first instance to escalate concerns about students in practice placements. Where students are also employees (such as apprentices or those studying on post-qualification courses), any issues will also need to be escalated to the employee’s line manager.

Students who do not appear to have the required knowledge, skills and professional attitude and so are at risk of not achieving the elements required to pass the placement:

This may occur for many reasons, such as, unprofessional behaviour, or lack of clinical skills and knowledge. Concerns about performance may stem from a single event (e.g. involvement in a medication error). In some cases, Practice Support Staff, working with Placement Supervisors and students, will be able to develop an action plan to overcome these challenges and support successful completion of outcomes. In these cases, there is no need for formal reporting, though discussions with relevant university staff, such as Link Lecturers or Academic Assessors, **must** be documented in the student’s practice assessment document.

Where the performance of students continues to fall short, a meeting between student, placement supervisor, Practice Support Staff and Faculty representative such as the Link Lecturer will be required. Though meetings such as this can fall at any time in the placement, they would ideally link to the midpoint interview that takes place at the halfway point of placement. This provides an opportunity to formatively assess the student's progress, identify risks to successful completion of learning outcomes, and develop an action plan. A record of this meeting and action plan **must** be recorded in the student's practice assessment document. Following this, there will be ongoing review of the student's performance for the remainder of their placement.

Students whose behaviour could be construed as misconduct:

On occasions, the behaviour of students may be such that it cannot be dealt with purely through the 'professional standards' outcomes in practice assessment documentation. Where behaviour goes beyond poor professional practice and could be classed as professional misconduct, concerns need to be raised with the Faculty as soon as possible. Similarly, there may be instances where a student's clinical performance is so poor (either over a period of time or in relation to a specific incident), that their suitability to be in practice is called into question. Again, the first step is for the concerned member of placement staff to raise the issue with Practice Support Staff. If the issue can be dealt with informally at this level, to the satisfaction of practice staff, then no further action will be required. However, the issue **must** be recorded in the student's practice assessment documentation and the Link Lecturer informed.

In most cases, allegations of misconduct will need formally investigating by the Faculty. Those concerns that cannot be dealt with informally at a practice level will require escalation to the Link Lecturer. They will then discuss the allegation with the student's Programme Director. The Programme Director will liaise with the relevant Professional Lead as necessary.

The Faculty will follow the University ***Regulations governing the investigation and determination of allegations of Professional Unsuitability and Professional Misconduct***. This document can be accessed on the University of Hull website via the Quality and Standards pages:

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE DOCUMENT](#)

There are instances where an investigation may need to be completed by an organisation other than the University (usually the placement provider) before informed judgements on misconduct can be made. In these cases, the Faculty will liaise closely with the organisation, support their investigation in any way possible, and await the outcome before, where appropriate, moving forward with internal disciplinary procedures. Where students are also employees (such as apprentices or

studying on post-qualification courses), any such allegation needs joint reporting to and investigating by the student's employing organisation.

Where it is considered that the student's behaviour presents a risk to themselves or others, then practice staff should ask students to leave placement and not return until agreed by the placement provider and the Faculty. Where students are also employees they may be temporarily suspended or withdrawn from 'frontline' clinical duties. This should be escalated immediately to the faculty via the relevant programme director. Where necessary, the Professional Lead/Programme Director will formally suspend the student from placement. This decision will be made collaboratively, with input from appropriate academic and practice-based staff. The student will be asked to meet with the Professional Lead and/or Programme Director at the next available opportunity, to ensure that necessary support is in place.

Once all investigations have been completed, the outcome will be shared with the placement provider that raised the initial concern.

Students whose health and wellbeing and/or fitness to practise is a cause for concern for practice staff:

Behaviour, health and/or professional conduct that adversely affect a student's fitness to practise, may result in their Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) refusing to record the student's award and entitlement to practise. A student's fitness to practise may be challenged when their behaviour, health and/or professional conduct gives cause for concern. In these circumstances, a student should be considered by Fitness to Practise procedures at Faculty level.

Responsibilities of Students in Relation to Health: In order to demonstrate that they are fit to practise, students should:

- a) Be aware that their health problem(s) may put themselves or others at risk;
- b) Seek medical or occupational health advice (following the University's referral processes), or both, if there is a concern about their health, including their mental health and wellbeing. Students must register with a GP so that they have access to independent and objective medical care;
- c) Accept that they may not be able to assess their own health accurately and should seek advice from a healthcare professional, and be willing to be referred for treatment and to engage in any recommended treatment programmes;
- d) Be aware that when they graduate they are responsible for informing their employer or other appropriate person if their health poses a risk to themselves or others and to declare any health problem(s).

If a student's physical or mental health and wellbeing is a cause of concern to practice staff, then this needs escalating as soon as possible. Often, concerns such as this are the result of pre-existing physical or mental health problems. However, concerns regarding health and wellbeing may be as a result of specific events on placement (e.g. involvement in a traumatic clinical event). Again, the primary points of contact are the Practice Support Staff working in placement provider organisations. Once the Practice Support Staff have been made aware, their primary contact to discuss the issue raised is the placement Link Lecturer. In cases where the student's health and/or wellbeing, or the wellbeing of others, may be compromised by their presence on placement, they should be advised to go home (if considered safe to do so) and not return to practice until the issue is resolved. The Link Lecturer will liaise with the relevant Faculty staff such as the student's AST and/or a member of the programme management team (e.g. programme director/professional lead) who will contact the student to ensure that they are safe and have the necessary support in place.

In selected cases, it may be possible for concerns regarding health to be addressed collaboratively by the Practice Support Staff and the Link Lecturer and if necessary the student's AST. However, in most cases, the concern will need escalating to the relevant programme director and/or professional lead for consideration. At this stage, the programme director and/or professional lead will make a joint decision on whether the student may be unfit for practise and should be removed temporarily from placement. These considerations should be made in liaison with the student and Practice Support Staff and evidence from the student's own GP may be requested, and a referral to the University's Occupational Health Department may be required.

Once all evidence has been gathered, an action plan to support the student in placement will be developed by academic and practice staff. If a decision is made that the student will be unfit to practise for some time, then any action plan may need to incorporate a period of suspension of studies. In all cases where concerns have been raised regarding a student's health and wellbeing, the faculty will provide Practice Support Staff with updates on the outcome of any assessments (within the boundaries of student confidentiality) and the need for any additional student support in subsequent placements.

Raising urgent concerns out of hours

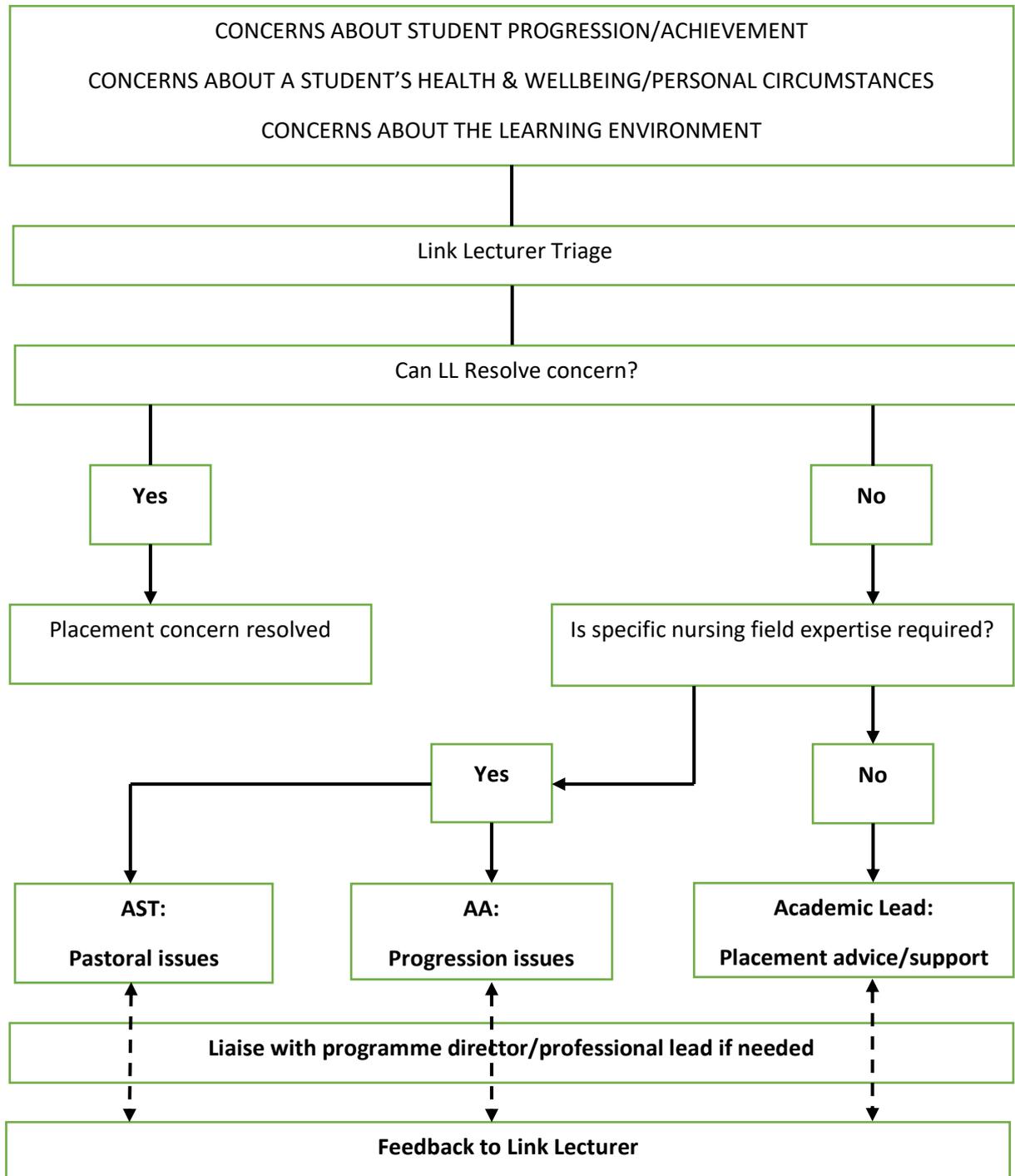
If there are concerns regarding a student's health and/or wellbeing or their fitness to practise that arise outside of normal university opening hours then students should be advised to leave the placement if it safe to do so. Responsibility for informing any relevant services such emergency services or support service would lie with the placement provider. At the first available opportunity the **Placement Resolution Protocol for Practice Concerns** must be followed.

Rarely, there will be situations related to a student's health and/or wellbeing or conduct that require the University to be made aware urgently and out-of-hours (when the Faculty staff discussed in this document are not available). In these cases, the main reception number for the University is 01482 346311; the emergency number for the University (covered 24/7) is 01482 465555.

Appendix 1

Placement Resolution Protocol for Practice Concerns

Please note that for Specialist Community Practice Programmes the initial point of contact is likely to be the Student's Nominated Assessor. In this case please substitute the term Link Lecturer appropriately.



KEY:
 AST = Academic Support Tutor
 AA = Academic Assessor
 LL = Link Lecturer

Escalating Concerns Regarding Nursing Students in Health and Social Care Placements in the FHS Flow Diagram

