

# Introduction

Welcome to this book on the relatively novel practice teacher role. This introduction to the book presents the rationale, scope and aims of the book, the structure of the essential components addressed and how to use the book.

## **The rationale, scope and aims of this book**

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This book on practice teaching explores the knowledge and skills required for supporting learning, and for assessing the knowledge and competence of students on specialist and advanced practice programmes. The role is currently predominantly for nurses but the principles and theories underpinning competent fulfilment of such roles are transferable and can be applied directly to other healthcare and social-care professionals learning support roles for learning beyond initial registration. The practice teacher's role is defined by the criteria, competencies and educational preparation requirements for the role as delineated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council [NMC] (2008a).

Practice teaching as a concept has prevailed since 2005 in an NMC circular, when it was instituted specifically for the facilitation of learning and the assessment of the competence of qualified nurses on specialist and advanced practice educational-preparation programmes. There is a paucity of textbooks available to facilitate practice teachers' role development, hence this textbook, which examines in detail the knowledge and competence required by healthcare professionals to fulfil this role effectively. The role incorporates consideration of relevant research, policy directives and potential issues.

Specific areas of knowledge and competence have been identified by the NMC (2008a) under eight domains, an overall descriptor or competence for each domain, and a number of outcomes or competencies. The domains are: establishing effective working relationships, facilitation of learning, assessment and accountability, evaluation of learning, creating an environment for learning, context of practice, evidence-based practice and leadership. The aim of this textbook is to examine the knowledge and competence required to fulfil the practice teacher role by critically evaluating and building on the concepts and theories inherent within the eight domains, and related outcomes.

The practice teacher's main function in the supervision of learning and the assessment of competence of students on specialist or advanced practice courses is one that has emerged to meet a provision that is recognised by healthcare professionals, healthcare trusts and the NMC. The role incorporates signing-off proficiency for qualified healthcare professionals on various post-qualifying courses, and also for pre-registration students on their final practice placement.

Initially the practice teaching role has been required predominantly for the supervision and assessment of students on specialist community public health nursing (SCPHN) courses, and it looks likely to become a requirement for supervising students on all clinical nurse specialist (CNS) and advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) courses. Consequently, there will be a need for more practice teachers in various specialisms in healthcare trusts in forthcoming years, and several higher education institutions (HEI) already offer programmes to meet this need.

Practice teaching is a component of the NMC's (2008a) developmental framework to support learning and assessment in practice, and is intercalated between the mentor and NMC approved teacher roles. Practice teaching therefore builds on healthcare professionals' existing expertise in supporting learning as a registrant and mentor by recognising their expertise, and enabling them to further develop and advance their knowledge and competence for supporting students on specialist practice qualifications (SPQ) and ANP courses. Students on SPQ and ANP courses, be it in acute, primary or continuing care, require a detailed and deep understanding of specific clinical interventions, and this book endeavours to enable the practice teacher to facilitate the acquisition of the necessary specialist or advanced clinical skills and knowledge.

Healthcare professionals will have met the NMC's outcomes for mentors through either a mentor educational preparation programme or through the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP[E]L). Although not research-proven, it appears that the usual single module (approximately 200 hours of student effort) mentor course does not adequately equip the mentor to supervise and assess students on specialist or advanced practice courses. The previous corresponding role towards students on community care courses was entitled 'community practice teacher' (CPT) (and later to some extent a practice teacher role for supervising students on community psychiatric nursing courses), and the educational preparation for these roles was generally HEI-based.

### **The structure of this book**

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The book achieves the above-mentioned aims by examining specific concepts that are inherent within the NMC's eight domains and outcomes, which are addressed as eight chapters, the first one of which examines the reasons, aims and scope of practice teaching, and the current position with specialist and advanced practice. Subsequent chapters examine:

- the management of inter-professional relationships in healthcare
- facilitating learning of generic, specialist and advanced clinical practice skills
- assessing specialist and advanced practice knowledge and competence
- the practice teacher's role in evidence-based practice and practice development
- the practice teacher's accountability
- practice teaching and leadership
- contemporary issues and further developments in practice teaching in healthcare and social-care professions, and continuing professional development (CPD) for practice teachers.

In brief detail, therefore, Chapter 1 – ‘The Scope of the Practice Teacher Role’ – begins by exploring in detail the rationales for the practice teacher role, and defines and distinguishes it from related teaching roles such as practice education facilitators (PEF) (or practice educators), mentors, ANPs, CNSs and consultant healthcare professionals. This is followed by an examination of specialist and advanced practice roles, and the diverse developments in this area. National and international standards for specialist and advanced practice are explored, along with current debates and research, which are inherent components of these concepts. The chapter then explores educational preparation programmes for both specialist and advanced practice, and practice teacher roles.

Chapter 2 – ‘Establishing and Managing Effective Working Relationships as a Practice Teacher’ – examines the reasons for cultivating working relationships in the supervision of learning specifically in relation to practice teaching. It also explores the nature and dynamics of professional and inter-professional relationships between healthcare professionals and their students, and with patients and service users, and the systematic ways in which they are formed, maintained and managed. Potential difficulties in establishing effective working relationships are also examined, and how they can be averted or resolved.

Chapter 3 – ‘Facilitating Learning of Specialist and Advanced Clinical Practice’ – focuses on the facilitation of learning for students on specialist and advanced practice courses, and those approaching completion of their pre-registration programmes. It explores the distinction between teaching and the facilitation of learning, and the most significant contemporary concepts and models of teaching and learning. The practice teacher’s role in the facilitation of learning of generic and specialist/advanced practice knowledge and competence is discussed, including the supervision of practice learning for students on SPQ and ANP programmes, as well as potential obstacles to this. Finally, the chapter takes a critical look at the practice teacher’s role in supporting learning in academic environments, and student learning at different academic levels.

Chapter 4 – ‘The Practice Teacher, Evidence-based Practice and Practice Development’ – centres on the practice teacher as an evidence-based practitioner in the context of specialist and advanced practice, and as a practice developer. Being a researcher, an innovator and a ‘nurse entrepreneur’ are inherent concepts, and activities that incorporate managing change and innovations, as well as disseminating innovative clinical practices.

The focus of Chapter 5 – ‘Assessing Specialist and Advanced practice Knowledge and Competence’ – is on the assessment of the knowledge and competence of healthcare professionals on specialist and advanced practice courses. The chapter begins by exploring the general nature of assessments, and incorporates assessing the professional knowledge and competence of students on SPQ and ANP programmes, as well as finalist pre-registration students. Assessment at different academic levels utilising assessment strategies and frameworks is explored, together with research on the assessment of competencies and service-user involvement in assessments. Safe and effective practice forms the focus of assessments, along with maintaining academic and professional standards.

Chapter 6 – ‘The Practice Teacher’s Accountability’ – starts by exploring the reasons for scrutinising the practice teacher’s accountability and responsibilities in facilitating learning and assessment. It therefore examines the nature of accountability, and the

parameters of the practice teacher's accountability, accountability in the assessment of knowledge and competence, ways of monitoring students' progress, how to manage underachievement in supervisees and the implications of pass/fail decisions, together with the ethical implications of these.

In Chapter 7 – Practice Teaching and Leadership – how the practice teacher can exercise leadership is analysed. Definitions and the scope of the concept of leadership, and the theories and framework of effective leadership, are addressed, together with the practice teacher's leadership in managing the challenges of supporting learning, such as the competing demands of their clinical practice, education, administrative and other roles.

Theory–practice integration and forward planning are seen as essential leadership capabilities, as is the practice teacher's leadership in the education and assessment of SPQ, ANP and pre-registration students, as well as their leadership in evaluating the effectiveness of practice teaching.

As a recently instituted concept, practice teaching will gradually evolve within different clinical specialisms. Further developments on practice teaching are also anticipated as the NMC's standards for learning and assessment in practice are embedded and the arising issues are redressed. Chapter 8 – 'Issues and Further Developments in Facilitating the Acquisition of Specialist and Advanced practice Skills' – explores these likely developments and issues that might surface in both practice teaching, and specialist and advanced practice, including the career structure of specialist and advanced practitioners, quality indicators for their clinical activities, and educational preparation and CPD for practice teachers. How these issues can be anticipated and managed will be examined.

All major concepts are looked at against the backdrop of the key questions: what the concept is about, why practice teachers need to know about it, how it is done, and any issues and developments. The components addressed cross-reference the literature on teaching in the healthcare professions throughout.

As for special features, each chapter opens with an introduction identifying the focus of the chapter, and chapter outcomes, and concludes with a chapter summary that identifies the areas addressed. Boxes, tables and figures are included as illustrations where appropriate. The text also includes action points and some case studies, with the former designed to engage the reader in critical thinking and problem solving, and for reflecting on the application of relevant knowledge to practice teacher work.

### **How to use this book**

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*Practice Teaching in Healthcare* is different from all other textbooks on the subject area, in that it is specifically for practice teachers supervising students on specialist and advanced practice courses, and it therefore examines inherent concepts in the context of current knowledge in the field, and how they apply to the practice teacher role, as well as to developments and issues. It is anticipated that this book will be a core textbook for nurses and midwives on practice teacher programmes, and a guide for other healthcare and social-care professionals with the practice teacher role, as the principles and practices explored are largely the same and therefore apply to all health and related professions.

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However, the textbook is not necessarily designed to be a manual or handbook (for practice teaching), which by implication can be prescriptive, but instead identifies and examines relevant theories, frameworks and concepts (and their application to practice), that constitute the practice teacher's armoury of knowledge and competence, and templates to become competent as a practice teacher.

I anticipate the book will be used by students on practice teacher courses. The NMC website identifies several universities as already approved to run the practice teacher course, and although it is thought that initially the uptake of the course might be slow as students on specialist and advanced practice courses are currently assessed by experienced mentors and by medical practitioners with appropriate skills. This book also provides a valuable update for previously qualified practice teachers, for example CPT and healthcare and social-care professionals supervising students on community psychiatric nursing and similar courses, for preceptors and aspiring teachers.

Furthermore, practice teacher educational preparation courses can form part of Master's in Education programmes, or those that encompass the achievement of NMC Advanced Practitioner competencies, and lead to awards such as an MSc in Advancing Practice.