

# Quality Assurance and Safety Policy for the Master of Nutrition and Dietetics (MNutr) programme



## Introduction to the quality assurance and safety policy

The University of Nottingham (UoN) aims to ensure that all practice placements used by UoN students provide a safe environment and are appropriate for the learning outcomes outlined by the Curriculum Framework for Pre-registration Education and Training of Dietitians [British Dietetic Association (BDA), 2013] and in the UoN Master of Nutrition and Dietetics (MNutr) programme specification. The policy is also informed by the following:

- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Education and Training (HCPC, 2014)
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2018)
- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Education Outcome Framework (2013) and Indicators (DHSC, 2013)

## Quality assurance and safety monitoring

Central to the UoN quality assurance and safety approach to monitoring is:

- Engagement of all stakeholders in developing policies and procedures
- Triangulation of evidence through a variety of collection mechanisms involving different stakeholders: practice educators, placement tutors and students (see Table 1).
- Timely review of evidence by the UoN, resulting in action plans when required, which might include requesting further written evidence from a placement provider or holding a Quality Partnership Visit. The UoN and placement provider will jointly develop and agree action plans, with clear implementation and monitoring timescales.
- Providing ongoing and responsive training to staff involved in the training and support of students on placement.
- Ensuring that good practice and innovation is recognised and disseminated to other practice placement providers in order to enhance quality of practice placement provision.

**Table 1. Summary of mechanisms for triangulation of evidence for quality assurance**

<i>Stakeholder evidence</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Timing</i>
Student evaluation of practice education	An online survey completed by students on their return to the UoN. Most of the anonymised evaluation is returned to the placement provider. One question remains confidential to the UoN and was developed in response to concerns that within a small profession, students might be reluctant to report matters that could influence their employment prospects. Whilst transparency between members of the partnership is a high priority, student safety remains paramount. Where concerns arise, further information may initially be sought from the student. Information will be	May (post C placement) and October (post A and B placement)

	dealt with sensitively and discussed with the placement provider, aiming for a timely resolution. Student evaluation forms are reviewed at the next Quality Review Meeting.	
Trainer response to student evaluations of placement	Placement provider comments on student evaluations are sought, and collated for review at the next Quality Review Meetings. Following this an action plan will be agreed as appropriate and monitored.	June (post C placement) and October (post A and B placement)
Placement tutor observations on placement	Each placement student is allocated a placement tutor who undertakes a pre- and post-placement tutorial with each of their tutees. They normally also undertake a half-way visit during B placement, following the half-way review. Half-way visits during C placements and further visits on A, B or C placements are carried out as required. While the placement tutor has the primary role of supporting the student, the tutor may also identify general areas of either good practice or concern relating to general safety, quality and risk related to placement provision. Placement tutors are required to document their observations following the placement visits or student tutorials. This is to ensure that information about practice and agreed changes is passed to the next tutor who supports students at that particular placement. Post-placement debrief group sessions, where the students have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their placement experience with their peers, relevant discussion points are added to the form by the Placement Team. These forms are reviewed at the next Quality Review Meeting and action agreed.	June (post C placement) and September (post A and B placement)

### Quality Partnership Visits

New placements are visited either by two UoN placement team members or one placement team member and a practice educator partner, with current experience of placement provision. The meeting involves discussions based on paperwork that is completed during the visit, covering areas of student training such as staffing, facilities and resources, and dietetic services provided by the organisation. Some organisations have a student training facilitator/clinical placement facilitator who can provide useful insight into existing resources and interprofessional learning (IPL) activities within the organisation, and may be able to offer additional support for dietetic student training provision. It is recommended that (if there is such a facilitator) they be invited to meeting. Practice educators already approved for dietetic placement provision by another HEI do not need additional approval by the UoN.

Placement providers are usually revisited every 3 years, as described by the process above. An earlier visit may be carried out if there is:

1. Significant organisational change that will affect student training provision, e.g. major organisational restructure, or a change in the Student Training Lead or Named Trainer (where they are key to placement provision).
2. Concern raised following evidence collection (Table 1). All concerns are discussed at Quality Review Meetings, or more immediately should the severity of a concern warrant it. A traffic light system approach indicates the level of concern for each placement:
  - For those rated as red, a priority meeting is organised between the UoN and placement provider. Concerns are discussed and an action plan

agreed. On going monitoring via the usual mechanisms, and where necessary a further meeting, ensures that the plan is put in place.

- Monitoring of placements with an amber rating highlights potentially less serious concerns. If the placement provider is not due to have a routine Quality Partnership Visit, an additional meeting may be arranged to provide quality and safety assurance and not to discuss specific student issues.

Relevant key aspects from the Partnership Visit are discussed at the next Quality Review Meeting and action agreed as appropriate.

### **Annual Review forms and Placement Provider Profiles**

Practice placements are asked to review information held by the UoN and to report any change to their provision of placements on an annual basis. They take the form of the:

#### *Annual Review form*

The Annual Review form asks for details of the named trainer, student training lead, additional organisational requirements such as occupational health (OH) and Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks, and capacity for practice education placements the next academic year. It also forms a health and safety agreement between the UoN and the practice educators, providing clear guidance for respective roles and responsibilities of the UoN and the placement provider.

Prior to commencement of the practice placement, the UoN will be responsible for preparing students appropriately, which includes the following:

- Coverage of the necessary scope of knowledge and development of core communication skills
- Occupational health clearance of students
- Enhanced DBS checks, usually carried out in year one of the MNutr programme
- Completion of a food hygiene certificate
- The student has responsibility to ensure their own health and safety, and will be required to disclose any long-term condition(s) (related to physical or mental health, or a specific learning difference) to the UoN, which may impact on the placement experience.

A Reasonable Adjustment for Placement (RAP) meeting will be arranged for any student with a declared health and/or learning-related concern. The Placement Manager or a placement tutor will facilitate discussions between the student and practice educators. Where required, reasonable adjustment will be discussed and agreed to ensure that the student is supported, and that their learning opportunities are maximised. Guidance will usually be taken from the student's support plan, the student themselves and UoN Student Support Services (where appropriate).

- Pre-placement sessions including mandatory training (such as infection control, safeguarding and basic emergency care), and professionalism.

While the UoN is responsible for student preparation for placement, the placement provider is primarily responsible for the health and safety of the student during their practice placement. This includes briefing the student on the organisation's health and safety policies during induction such as infection control, fire and incident reporting. The Annual Review agreement also outlines the placement provider role

in providing appropriate student learning opportunities, supervision, support and feedback.

Any quality assurance or health and safety concerns identified by the monitoring mechanism (Table 1), will be discussed at the next Quality Review Meeting, or more immediately should the need arise. An appropriate action plan will be agreed and monitored.

#### *Placement Provider Profile*

These are student-facing documents that students use to inform their decisions on their preferred choices for A, B and C placements. They provide information about provision of dietetic services and learning opportunities, accommodation, need for a car on placement, uniform requirements on placement and contact information for lead supervising dietitian for each placement.

This information is usually sought over the summer months, with an early September deadline, prior to the student allocation process and the autumn semester Quality Review Meeting. Required follow up action will be identified and undertaken prior to students commencing their placements later in the academic year.

#### **Quality Review Meetings**

Quality Review Meetings are arranged twice yearly (July and November/December). They involve experienced practice educators associated with UoN dietetic placement provision, the UoN Placement Team, the MNutr Course Manager and the Head of Nutritional Sciences. Quality assurance and safety evidence from students, placement tutors and practice educators (Table 1) is reviewed and discussed, along with information from Annual Review forms and recent Quality Partnership Visits.

#### **Student Training Forum**

The Student Training Forum (STF) is organised by the UoN and provides a twice yearly meeting for Practice Education Managers, Student Training Leads, Supervising Dietitians, and the MNutr team to discuss and respond to identified practice placement needs. It is also an opportunity to share good practice. Topics may be raised through a variety of quality assurance processes such as Annual Review forms, discussions during Quality Review meetings or feedback from students, practice educators or placement tutors. Changes within the UoN or to the MNutr programme will also be discussed.

#### **East Midlands Strategic Dietetic Managers' Meeting**

This strategic group meets in June and December. It is made up of Placement Provider Service Leads and a representative from the MNutr team. The HEI/Placement Provider partnership is a standing agenda item, with an opportunity to share good practice and quality-related initiatives.

#### **Use of practice placements linked to other HEIs**

Usually, UoN will work with a placement provider to ensure certain safety and quality standards are established within the practice placement before a student is offered a placement there, i.e. hold a Quality Partnership Visit, complete Annual Review forms, return Placement Provider Profiles, etc. In the event of needing to use a placement

provider (affiliated with a different HEI) to ensure student placement provision, safety and quality assurance will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Practice educators already approved for dietetic placement provision by another HEI will not need further approval by the UoN. Instead, the following steps will be taken before a student starts their placement:

- Information will be sought from the HEI or the placement provider about quality assurance and monitoring procedures for placements.
- Further details about the practice placement will be sought and agreed such as the range of experiences that will be available to the student, mentor support, support offered in preparation of the portfolio of evidence, requirements of the case study component, frequency of written feedback, timings of reviews and assessments, progression rules, and placement tutor visits.

## **Student complaints procedure**

In the event of a student wishing to complain about an aspect of their practice placement, the UoN Code of Practice for Student Complaints will be used, as detailed in the UoN Quality Manual. All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly and in a timely way in partnership with the student, the placement provider and the UoN. Any complaint and the agreed action plan will be discussed and monitored at the Quality Review meeting. The student complaint may be informal or formal:

### *Informal student complaint*

An informal or verbal complaint will usually be dealt with by verbal communication between the student, the Placement Manager and the placement tutor. Further communication may take place with the Student Training Lead and practice placement team as required. The resolution or action plan to address the concern will usually be shared with the student, the placement team and practice educators.

### *Formal student complaint*

In the event of a formal complaint or when the informal complaints procedure has not been able to adequately address the concern, a formal written complaint should be submitted to the Course Manager. The student should be directed to the UoN Code of Conduct for Student Complaints. The student should then complete a Student Complaints Form, detailing the nature of the complaint, the action already taken and an explanation as to why this has not resolved the issue, followed by their desired outcome. A formal review by the Head of School will follow. In the event that a resolution is not agreed, guidance in the UoN Code of Conduct states that the complaint should be submitted to the Faculty Pro Vice Chancellor. Once the internal complaints procedure has been completed, and if the student is still not satisfied with the outcome, they may take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

## **Fitness to practise**

A student who successfully completes the MNutr course is eligible for registration with the HCPC as a dietitian. As such, they must meet the necessary Standards for Education and Training (HCPC, 2014), the Standards of Proficiency for the profession (HCPC, 2013) and the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2016). UoN students who behave in a manner that calls their fitness to practise as a student dietitian into question, either during their time at university or on placement, will have the incident reported via a Concern Form. Concern Forms can be completed by

an MNutr staff member or a practice educator and should be submitted to the MNutr Course Manager. The severity of the incident will inform the following course of action and will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Possible outcomes range from the Concern Form being placed on the student's UoN record to a full Fitness to Practise investigation by the UoN Fitness to Practise Committee and could result in termination of their study at the UoN.

While a student is on their practice placement, it is the responsibility of the placement provider to immediately inform the placement tutor if the student is involved in an incident that calls in to question their fitness to practise. The placement provider should provide written documentary evidence of the incident and subsequent action taken. Following this, a meeting involving the student, placement tutor and the Course Manager will be held to discuss the incident and agree appropriate action.

Less serious events, such as an incident or near miss report that has been submitted at organisation level, should be documented on the student's final assessment.

### **References and further sources of information:**

University of Nottingham (UoN) Safety Office (2012) Student Placement Health and Safety Agreement. Available at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/policies-and-guidance/placements/placements.aspx> [Accessed 27 June 2018].

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The British Dietetic Association (BDA). Practice Education home page. Available at: <https://www.bda.uk.com/training/practice/home> [Accessed 27 June 2018]:

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- Health and Care Professions guidance to practice education (2016)

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HCPC Standards of Proficiency. Available at: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=43> [Accessed 27 June 2018]:

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The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2018). The Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-revised-uk-quality-code> [Accessed 27 June 2018].

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