Faculty of Health

Standards to Support Students who are Underachieving or Failing in Practice

1.0 Introduction

The following standards have been developed for Schools / Departments in the Faculty of Health and Practice Partners in relation to supporting students who are underachieving or failing in practice.

The term mentor / assessor has been used throughout these standards and refers to professionals who have undertaken preparation to teach, facilitate and support learning and conduct formative and summative assessment of a student’s performance in practice which complies with the requirements of the relevant professional / statutory / regulatory bodies.

These Standards should be read in conjunction with the mentor / assessor handbook specific to the programme the student is studying. These offer guidance about the individual practical assessment requirements particular to each programme of study.

The term underachievement refers to the level of performance demonstrated by a student at a formative assessment point.

The term failure refers to the student being unsuccessful in any summative assessment in practice.

2.0 Assessment of Practice - First Attempt

Mentors / assessors of practice must use the relevant assessment criteria set out in the practice document to assess students’ performance. Students who are underachieving or failing in practice must be identified by mentors / assessors of practice using these criteria. An equitable level of support should be offered to all students engaging in an assessment of practice irrespective of how many attempts the student has previously undertaken.

A minimum of one formative assessment of the student’s performance in practice must be carried out by the mentor / assessor by the midpoint of the placement duration. This must be undertaken both verbally and in writing.

During formative assessments, mentors / assessors must draw students’ attention to areas of underachievement in a timely manner.
The mentor / assessor must:

- Provide the student with direct and specific clarification of the current area of underachievement;
- Redirect the student to the standard(s) which is to be achieved in practice;
- Encourage the student to reflect on their own level of performance;
- Set goals, in partnership with the student, which indicate the target level of performance;
- Encourage the student to identify the actions to resolve the issues where they are underachieving;
- Encourage the student to identify any issues which are preventing them from performing at the required level;
- Provide the student with a written development plan indicating help and resources available to address areas where they are underachieving;
- Identify and record review dates with the student;
- Provide the student with reasonable learning opportunities and experiences to increase their chances of addressing the area(s) where they are underachieving;
- Advise on additional resources available in the practice area;
- Refer the student to appropriate resources available in the Faculty of Health and Birmingham City University*;
- Inform the designated point of contact who supports mentors / assessors within the practice setting;
- Provide ongoing feedback regarding progress towards targets;
- Document progress;
- Provide the student with summative feedback and grade the final performance based on the relevant assessment criteria set out in the practice document.

The point of contact within the placement organisation must:

- Arbitrate, mediate, moderate, facilitate, negotiate, communicate and liaise with both student and mentor / assessor regarding the issues where a student is underachieving in practice;
- Provide information to the mentor / assessor and student about practical assessment procedures and additional support available to help the student achieve the level of performance required to pass in practice.

*Appropriate resources at Birmingham City University include:

- Department of Practice Learning;
- Disability tutor;
- Student services;
- Personal Development Department;
- Occupational Health;
- Programme Director;
- Personal Tutor;
- Students’ Union.
3.0 Assessment of Practice – Prior to Re-Assessment in Practice

Additional support from Faculty of Health, Birmingham City University staff should be made available to students who have failed their first assessment in practice. This should be available prior to the re-assessment of practice being undertaken.

The Students Programme Handbook and Mentor Handbook must identify Faculty academic staff or the Department who will support and work in partnership with the student to devise a development plan which encourages the student to:

- Reflect on the practice areas in which they have failed;
- Devise their own aims for the re-assessment in practice;
- Plan additional professional development which should be undertaken both prior to and during the subsequent placement.

The support for the student may be:

- Personal Tutor;
- Department of Practice Learning;
- Placement Support Team;
- Programme Director.

The identified member of staff / Department must make the placement area aware that a student is undertaking a re-assessment of practice prior to the placement commencing. This should include details of any special requirements relevant to the re-assessment.

4.0 Re-assessment of Practice

The point of contact within the placement organisation must be available to offer support to the student and mentor / assessor during the student’s re-assessment of practice. Where a student continues to underachieve at the formative assessment the following actions must be taken:

- The mentor / assessor must undertake all activities identified for the first attempt. (section 2.0);
- Faculty staff must ensure the student is aware of the support available if they wish to have the opportunity to discuss alternative career development options.

5.0 Re-assessment of Practice – Exam Board Decision Fail and Withdraw

The following support must be available to students who have failed and been withdrawn by an Exam Board from a programme of study based on a failure of a re-assessment of practice:

- Personal Tutor;
- Programme Director;
- Student Services;
- Personal Development Department - Professional Navigator;
- Students’ Union.
The following support must be made available to mentors / assessors who have failed a student in an assessment of practice by the point of contact within the practice organisation:

- Writing statements and providing evidence;
- Debriefing;
- Feedback on the conduct of the assessment.

6.0 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

These guidelines will be reviewed annually by the Department of Practice Learning in consultation with the Associate Dean (Academic Development and Quality Enhancement) The review will take account of Professional / Statutory / Regulatory Body standards and requirements.

Where revisions to this Policy take place it will be presented to the Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee for review and approval in principle, and submitted to Faculty Board for review and approval for implementation in the Faculty.

Department of Practice Learning
School of Professional Practice
Centre for Academic Quality and Student Governance

Birmingham City University’s commitment to equality means that this policy has been screened in relation to paying due regard to the general duty in relation to the relevant protected characteristics, the use of comprehensible, inclusive language, and the avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request.

Equality Analysis completed 10.8.12