

MAKING THE MOST OF CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

QUICK GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS



An Australian Government Initiative



HealthWorkforce
AUSTRALIA



> Congratulations!

You have agreed to supervise students on clinical placement – good on you! But maybe you are not so sure how to approach the placement or what to do with the student when they arrive. Questions might be running through your mind: how do I help them learn? How do I keep my patients safe? Do I have time for this? What documentation do I need?

This short resource provides some helpful tips to help you be a successful supervisor and get the most out of the placement. It is intended as a ready reckoner – not as a comprehensive guide. It is specifically designed to meet the needs of all health professionals and includes strategies for those in rural settings where student placements haven't been regular or supported in the past.

More detailed information, tools, downloadable templates and resources are provided in the web based resource - *Making the Most of Clinical Placements – Tips, Tools and Templates*. This web based resource also includes the full list of references used in developing this booklet which builds on work undertaken by others.

The term patient is used in this booklet and is intended to be inclusive of patients, and consumers. Likewise the term education provider is inclusive of Universities, TAFE's and private education providers.

> What is supervision?

As a supervisor you need to:

- First and foremost - ensure high quality and safe patient care and treatment at all times
- Expose students to relevant learning opportunities and support them to learn and practice specific skills
- Encourage deep learning through questioning and reflection
- Assist to reduce any stress the student might be feeling on the placement
- Promote interprofessional learning, collaboration and clinical team building – help them feel like they belong in the team
- Provide regular feedback
- Use the opportunity to contribute to your own learning.

Be active - The more active you are in your role as a supervisor the more you and your student can expect to gain from the experience. Some students, or all students in some situations, are “unconsciously incompetent” — that is, they don’t know what they don’t know, and will not always recognise situations that are beyond their current abilities where patient safety may be at risk. Active supervision requires you to understand when to intervene and when to allow the student freedom of action. This will probably require you to supervise the student more closely to begin with, or when they are performing higher risk activities and allowing them more freedom once you have been assured of their competence.

The best way to support your students is to:

- Plan their placement – what will be happening when they are there, what tasks and activities can you assign to them, what do you want them to do for you (Learning contract template is available on the website and a smaller version on the inside back cover for you to use)
- Provide them with a safe environment - this includes physical, emotional and professional safety
 - > Make sure they know their manual handling and infection control skills
 - > Think about how you will protect their emotional safety – you might need to brief and debrief particular situations / patients
 - > See the section on professionalism
- Give them responsibility for patient care appropriate to their level of skill – balance protecting your patients with their need to learn and to be challenged
- Role model good teamwork
- Be receptive to new ideas and knowledge – let them teach you!
- Be supportive of their learning – be receptive to and encourage their questions, direct them to further information and evidence, be proactive about potential learning experiences in which they can participate
- Be honest and open about your own knowledge and competence – don’t be afraid to not know something
- Give regular feedback and encouragement.

Remember supervision doesn't mean you need to be watching your student/s all the time. If appropriate remote supervision using the telephone and email can also be used. The level of supervision they require will depend on your patients, the discipline specific requirements and the year and competence of the student.

> What do I need to do to be successful?

Whilst there are many benefits to taking students it is widely acknowledged it is not always easy. Common issues to having students are listed below with suggestions on how to overcome them and help ensure the placement is as successful as possible.

Issues	Suggestions to mitigate
Short staffed / busy	<p>Whilst it does take some additional time to host students, it is possible to have the students assist with the workload and with special projects.</p> <p>Find out what they are capable of doing – allocate tasks accordingly.</p>
Lack of confidence in own ability	<p>You don't have to know everything.</p> <p>What you do know and exposure to your place of work will be of benefit to your student.</p> <p>The student may be able to help you increase your confidence by helping you realise just how much you do know. Equally, learning from the students can be one of the real benefits from taking students.</p> <p>Collaborate with others to provide joint supervision.</p> <p>This resource will provide many useful tips and resources.</p> <p>Education providers will also provide specific support to supervisors.</p>
Part-time staff	<p>If you are a sole practitioner then consider negotiating to take a student part time or share the student with someone that works different hours to you, even if they work in a different organisation/service. Alternatively it may suit the student to work part-time hours over more weeks.</p> <p>For those working in a team environment, work with your colleagues to share the supervision.</p>
Supervision and workplace learning not valued	<p>Hosting students is a clear demonstration of your organisations intent to support the learning of the current and future workforce.</p> <p>Celebrate the successes gained by having students through newsletters, at team events and through formal reports evaluating the process.</p>

Issues	Suggestions to mitigate
Lack of clarity	<p>It is important that you, the student, the education provider and your organisation are clear about who is responsible for what. Key documents that will assist in providing this clarity include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The placement contract between the education provider and your organisation outlining the organisational responsibilities • A clinical supervisors position description or role outline provided by the education provider • The Students placement plan outlining the specific objectives for the placement • Competency statements and suggested activities for students at that level, provided by the education provider. <p>When in doubt ask the contact provided for the education provider.</p>
Student not interested / engaged	<p>Have a conversation with the student about what they want to get from the placement. Encourage them to see the potential to refine their skills or practice new skills. Find out their previous experiences with clinical placements that may be impacting their attitude. Consider getting them to complete a pre-placement survey (see Pre-placement survey template).</p>

> How do I structure the placement?

Most clinical placements have traditionally been undertaken in a 'block' format. However if this doesn't match the way you work for eg. if you work in multiple settings across the day, week or month or only work part time, don't worry as this provides an ideal opportunity to work creatively with the education provider about how best to structure student placements, for example:

- Have students accompany you on your schedule across settings – the travel time provides an ideal opportunity for reflective practice
- Place students in one setting, with a local contact for on site supervision and set them a project to do whilst they are on placement. Check in with them daily to see how they are progressing and resolve any issues
- Have students undertake their placement across several weeks – for example 2 days a week to match your hours / availability (may not suit some education providers/ students)
- Work with others in your team to support the student and provide exposure to the various roles/shifts in your service and provide direct or indirect supervision for their activities.

> What do I need to orient them to?

Help them feel as comfortable as possible, as early as possible. Remember what it feels like to be a fish out of water!

Help them understand:

- The layout of the facility – ensure they understand key landmarks particularly if the facility is large or spread out
- Who's who – who are the key people and what are their roles
- Location of staff services – bathrooms, tea rooms, personal storage, public transport, parking, bike storage, food outlets
- Professional standards – dress codes, identification, how to address patients, how to address staff
- The telephone system – how to use it, how to answer it, how to take enquires, how to transfer calls
- Internet access, use of social media, use of personal mobile phones/devices
- Record keeping – what and how will they contribute
- Patient / staff confidentiality
- Culture – models of care, service philosophy, customer service approaches, staff interaction, patient advocacy
- Hand hygiene
- Work health and safety procedures, particularly manual handling
- Any specific cultural issues.

Ensure they have provided you with copies of Working with Children clearance, immunisation status, confidentiality, and other required documents.

> What can they do?

This will depend on which discipline and what year they are in. The education provider and the student will be able to tell you the expected scope of practice for their placement. In addition the student will have specific objective for this placement. The extent of supervision required for each student and each activity will also vary significantly. Some activities to consider include:

Patient Activities

- Working with administration / reception staff to understand booking, admission, billing practices, record retrieval
- Taking health histories / conducting physical assessments
- Communicating with a variety of patients / clients to better understand their experiences with the health system
- Medication reviews
- Observing / assisting with minor procedures
- Menu reviews
- Support with activities of daily living
- Rehabilitation exercises
- Providing a longer consultation either preceding or following your consultation to address certain issues
- Follow-up services to assess the outcome of prior interventions, treatment regimes etc
- Care planning and documenting care plans
- Exploring, interrogating, testing health informatics including patient records, decision making aids and audit tools.

Service activities

Students can undertake activities that you and your staff are often too busy to. Their 'fresh eyes' may provide perspectives you haven't previously considered. Depending on the students' interests, allocated time and competence the following activities may be suitable.

- Undertake "draft" reports, correspondence letters to patients, appointment scheduling and phone liaisons.
- Research new equipment or stock items.
- Develop IT solutions for your business such as formatting marketing or educational material, and the development of PowerPoint presentations.
- Review and provide feedback on systems and procedures.
- Undertake an improvement project for example: to develop patient educational tools; to perform a literature review on a relevant topic, to perform a research project or analysis of particular issues.
- Undertaking clinical audits and quality improvement activities.

Consider planning their placement in advance (see Placement planner template) to ensure that their time with you benefits both of you. The key is being organised and anticipating what can be achieved in their allocated time.

> How do I encourage professional behaviour?

Use your time with the student to further develop their professional behaviour and socialisation into the health sector. Role model great professionalism at all times, question their understanding and perceptions, challenge them to think and critique others behaviours, discuss their approach and better options. Professional behaviour is made up of the following three components. Think about how to build this in to your supervision:

- **Professional Boundaries** - what are they, how do you protect them, how are they breached
- **Professional Appearance** - what are your standards, why are they important
- **Respectful communication** - what is it, how do they address clients, colleagues.

Remember habits develop early in our professional life – you have the opportunity to influence positive behaviours.

> What formal feedback should I provide?

Open and regular communication is essential for a positive learning experience for both you and the student. Consider having at least three formal meetings with the student: one at commencement, one mid-term and one on completion. In many cases a weekly meeting will ensure the placement is on track and issues are resolved early. As a general guide consider the following:

Initial meeting

The more effort put into this initial meeting the more likely the placement will run smoothly and be a positive experience for all involved. At this meeting:

- Ensure the student is oriented to the placement, facility and staff
- Ensure learning goals and objectives are clearly articulated and agreed
- Outline your process for supervision, assessment and feedback. Find out what the student / education provider requires of you
- Ensure there is a mutual understanding of each others expectations and needs.

Weekly or Mid-Term Meeting

At these meetings:

- Track progress against goals and objectives
- Encourage the student to reflect on experiences and relate these back to their objectives
- Make any changes to their placement to ensure learning needs are being met
- Clarify any issues.

Final Meeting

At this meeting:

- Evaluate the placement (see Survey questions template)
- Provide final feedback on the students progress (there should be no surprises as any issues should have been raised directly at the weekly meetings)
- Complete any placement records required by the Education provider.

> How do I use reflective practice?

Reflective practice is a vital skill for students to learn. Reflecting allows for recognition of their strengths and weaknesses, identification of areas to improve and develops clinical reasoning used in the delivery of safe patient care.

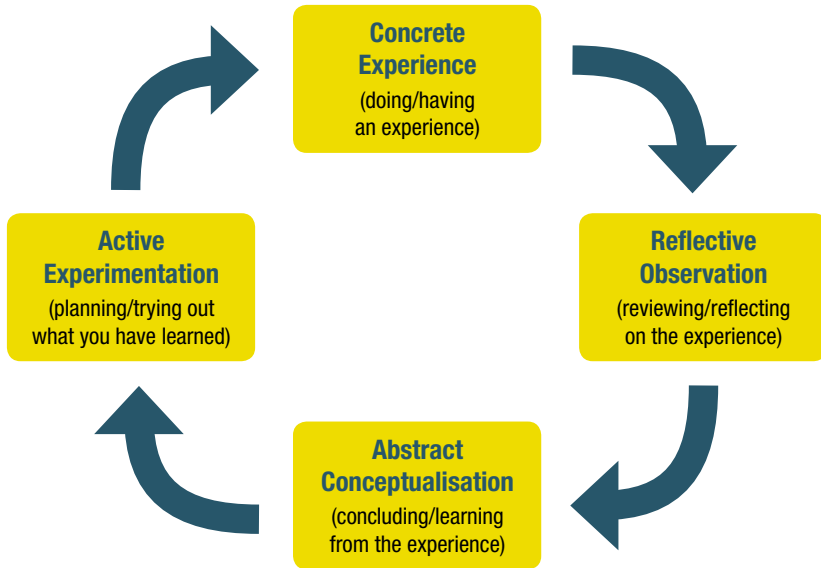
Reflective practice can be conducted:

- During structured supervision sessions where the student provides the supervisor with an overview of an issue or incident and the supervisor uses questioning to encourage reflection on what happened, the students response, alternative responses, confirmation of appropriate behaviour and areas in need of improvement. See sample questions in next section.
- Through journal/record keeping, where the student is encouraged to record their experiences, work through the issues and reflect on their learning. They can then use this as a tool for discussion with their supervisor or to keep as a personal record of their learning.

> How do I help them become more confident and competent?

One of the important roles you have as a supervisor is to help the student improve their competence and confidence. As an expert clinician you will have developed a high level of automation in what you – you do it without thinking about why and how. You need to understand where the student is currently at and unpack how you know what you know to be able to help them learn. Find out from the student how confident they are, what skills they have currently developed and which skills they would like to develop or consolidate in this placement.

Remember that everyone has a preferred learning style but workplace experiences essentially follow a standard learning process. One which you can help facilitate.



Kolb's Learning Process

Adapted from Davies in Edith Cowan University Interprofessional learning through simulation Reflective practice: a tool to enhance professional practice

There are a number of strategies you may then wish to use to help them move through each stage

- Making available opportunities to practice clinical skills
- Demonstrating a skill and then supervising the student performing the new skill
- Encouraging them to perform competencies under supervision
- Using scenarios to test their thinking and decision making skills
- Open ended questions for eg:
 - > would you approach doing 'x' procedure?
 - > Explain to me how you might assess a patient presenting with 'y'?

- > What do you see as the risks of this approach and how would you minimise those risks?
- > What are the options for this patient? Which would you recommend and why?
- > What are your observations regarding this patient?
- > Which protocol / clinical guideline is appropriate to follow for this patient? Why?
- > What did you notice was the steps / thinking / reasoning I used in that encounter?
- Demonstrating a skill and then supervise the student performing the new skill
- Encouraging them to perform competencies under supervision
- Using scenarios to test their thinking and decision making skills
- Using reflective questioning to help them review and learn from their experiences:
 - > What happened / occurred?
 - > What did you do well?
 - > What caused you most angst? Why?
 - > Why do you think that happened?
 - > What did you consider before making that decision?
 - > What were some of your other options?
 - > Was what occurred directly related to your interventions?
 - > How did you assess the outcome of your intervention?
 - > What would you do differently next time?
 - > What would help you prepare for a similar situation?

> What assessments do I need to complete?

Most clinical placements require some assessment of the student. This may be on their placement as a whole (summative) or may include the assessment of specific competencies (formative). Confirm with the student at the initial start up meeting what is required from you – don't let them come to you on the last day with forms needing to be filled out!

Most education providers will provide documentation and an assessment approach for you to use. If they don't then the following table provides an approach to formal assessment based on how safe, accurate, and efficient the student is and how much assistance they require.

Competency rating	Criteria	Quality of performance	Assistance required
Proficient	Safe, accurate each time	Efficient Coordinated Confident Occasional expenditure of excess energy within an expedient time frame	Minimal supportive cues
Advanced Beginner	Safe, accurate each time	capable Coordinated Confident Some expenditure of excess energy within a reasonable time frame	Infrequent supportive cues
Beginner	Safe/accurate with supervision	Skilful in parts of behaviour Occasionally inefficient and uncoordinated Expendes excess energy within a delayed period of time	Frequent verbal and occasional physical directive cues in addition to supportive cues
Novice	Safe but not alone requires supervision Accurate – not always	Unskilled, inefficient Considerable expenditure of energy Prolonged period of time Unable to demonstrate specific behaviour Lacks confidence, coordination, efficiency	Continuous verbal and frequent physical cues
Unsatisfactory	Not observed, not applicable or unable to assess.		

(adapted from Australian Catholic University. 2012. School of Nursing and Midwifery Clinical Placement Handbook v1.1)

How do I provide good feedback?

Providing feedback can be the most challenging part of supervision. Like all things – practice makes perfect!

Don't leave it to the formal assessment process to provide feedback to the student. Provide regular, timely feedback. Always try to start and finish with something positive. Consider using the following statements to begin the conversation:

- I really like the way you approached Mrs X, you made her feel welcome and comfortable
- Your documentation is succinct and well structured

- I thought you responded appropriately in that situation
- Your findings and recommendations were relevant and appropriate
- That was a tough day, thanks for being so helpful.

Then consider helping them see better ways to do things:

- Next time you might like to think about introducing yourself
- Don't forget that many older patients don't like being addressed so informally
- I think you are getting a bit flustered – how about you take some time out to plan the rest of the shift / your approach for the next patient
- I'd like you to read some other charts and see if you can identify better ways to document your assessment. Yours seem a little disjointed at present.

Ask them questions – encourage reflective practice at this point.

Remember when giving negative feedback:

- Be gentle
- Be respectful
- Don't humiliate them
- Be specific and where possible provide solutions for improvement.

> What if things aren't going so well

Conflict may arise in any situation – deal with it early with open and honest communication. Review the learning objectives and set new ones if required.

Poor performance or attitude should not be tolerated – work with the student to ensure they are aware of your concerns. Help them determine how to fix them. Don't hesitate to contact the education provider if you continue to be concerned.

> Evaluate and Improve

Don't forget to get the student to evaluate their placement so you can find out what worked well for them and where you might be able to improve next time. See Survey questions template.

> Templates, Tools and Resources

The web based resource *Making the Most of Clinical Placements – Tips, tools and templates* has much more information. It includes more background reading and links to other useful resources. It also includes the following templates which you can download and customise.

Health service student agreement
Patient consent
Patient information flyer
Patient satisfaction questions Placement confirmation letter
Pre-placement survey

Learning contract
Orientation checklist
Orientation handbook contents guide Student confidentiality agreement
Placement planner template
Student survey questions

> References and Useful Links

Much of what is included in this document builds on work done by others. For a full list of the references used in developing this resource, and to access other useful resources go to www.ccctraining.org and click on the ICTN tab to view *Making the Most of Clinical Placements – Tips, Tools and Templates*.

> Thank you!

The future of our health workforce relies heavily on people like you willing to contribute to the development of students and beginning practitioners - so thank you! Hopefully you will have found it to be a positive and rewarding experience. If you would like to join a *community of practice* on clinical supervision contact the Riverina ICTN.

> Evaluation

The Riverina ICTN is keen that this document is and remains useful. For that to happen we would very much appreciate your feedback. If you have any comments please call the ICTN on 02 6023 7147 or log on to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ICTNSUPERVISIONRESOURCE>.

> Acknowledgements

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> Placement Planner and Learning Contract

To download the following templates, go to www.ccctraining.org and click on the ICTN tab to view *Making the Most of Clinical Placements – Tips, Tools and Templates*.

Placement Planner Template

<p>Making the Most of Clinical Placements – Tips, tools and templates</p> <p>Placement Planner Template</p> <p>It may be useful to develop an overarching timetable for the students location / activities whilst on placement. This a template only – adjust activities to suit clinical placement and student capabilities and learning objectives.</p>				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM				
Orientation	Multidisciplinary Team Meeting	Grand Rounds	Outreach Clinic	Consultations
Agreement of objectives				
Confirmation of Plan	[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]
Lunch				
PM				
History Taking & Client Assessment	Wound Clinic	Medication Chart Reviews	Outreach Clinic	Quality Audit
[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]	[Location] [Supervisor Name]
		Supervision Session		Supervision session

Placement Learning Contract Template

Making the Most of Clinical Placements – Tips, tools and templates

Placement Learning Contract Template

Student name: _____ Placement end date: _____ Supervisor: _____
 Placement start date: _____ Clinical Areas for placement: _____
 Health service/Agency: _____

Objectives	Strategies	Timeframe	Evidence	Verification/Evaluation
What specifically do I want to learn on placement?	How will I achieve this objective?	What time is required for this learning objective to be achieved?	How will I know that I have achieved the learning objective?	How will I prove to my supervisor that I have achieved the learning objective?

Student Signature: _____ Supervisor signature: _____
 Date: _____ Date: _____



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