Guidelines for auditors undertaking educational audits of practice learning environments

Auditors must meet the criteria to become an auditor and have been prepared appropriately to fulfil their auditing role – see 'Preparation of auditors for the educational audit of practice learning environments.'

Preparing for audit

Be clear why you are auditing. For example the placement is due for a full audit, it is a new placement, or there have been significant changes necessitating a full audit. If the placement is undergoing significant change, it may be better to undertake a support visit.

Look at the previous placement audit (if appropriate):
Were any issues raised?
Is there evidence to show these have been addressed?

Look at recent students' evaluations of practice (if appropriate):
Were any issues raised?
Is there any evidence to show these have been addressed?
Are there any different issues raised in these compared to the last audit?

Take with you and be prepared to discuss:
- Details of mentor update programmes and other ways of updating – for example the online mentor work book www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/nursing/mentors/update.aspx
- Latest Mentor's newsletter and Mentorship Bulletin

During the audit

- Check the evidence to support information given by placement in the audit document.
- In particular, address issues that have been highlighted at the previous audit and/or by students (if appropriate).
- Ensure the mentors' details are on going, including last update dates. If staff are unable to provide update dates – remind them of the need for annual updates, provide information re local updates and ask how they plan to ensure these take place.
- Give information re Mentors newsletter, Mentorship Bulletin and Mentorship modules (as appropriate).
- Discuss the role and activities of the PLT (if appropriate).
- Have the placement staff mapped learning opportunities against NMC proficiencies? If not, how will they address this and when will it be completed?
- Have the placement staff produced introductory information for the placement? If not, when will this be produced?
- Clarify the range of student numbers and type/stage of training of students usually in practice at any given one time and discuss how placement staff are meeting their needs in terms of support and learning opportunities. (Auditors are **not** to negotiate student numbers in practice).
- Talk to students (if available) about their experiences in practice.

- Ascertain if changes to the placement have or are likely to take place that may affect the students and mentors in practice. Discuss the strategies that are or will be in place to address them.
- Ascertain any new developments in practice and note examples of best practice/innovations in practice.
- For new placements – what arrangements are in place for them to complete authorisation for their placement details to go on the School website?
  (Check process with local DAT Chairs.)
- When completing the 'auditors, recommendations and comments' sheet include the following:
  - Suitability of the placement for the students placed in the practice area i.e. is the placement able to provide a safe and appropriate learning environment in which students are supported effectively and opportunities are available to facilitate student achievement of agreed learning outcomes/proficiencies?
  - Highlight areas of best practice.
  - Identify any areas that need to be addressed (if appropriate) and set dates by which action should be taken.
  - Negotiate a review date (if appropriate).

Following the audit

When audits have been completed, the audit documentation must be returned to the appropriate audit secretary at the appropriate centre as soon as is reasonably practicable.

If the practice is deemed highly unsuitable – for example unsafe practice – for which measures cannot be put into place immediately, auditors, should recommend that the students be removed from the placement. In such instances the 'Formal Process for the Removal of Clinical Placements for Preregistration Student Nurses' must be followed. This includes immediately informing the Placement Provider Education Lead, senior placement staff (as appropriate), the chair of the District Audit Team, the Practice Learning Lead or Unit and Allocations Officer, so necessary action may be taken, including informing staff at other HEIs (if appropriate). Clear evidence must be provided to support the decision made.

If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact Pam Bown pam.bown@nottingham.ac.uk or the chair of the District Audit Team at your Centre.

Reviewed and amended by Central Audit Group 8.10.08.
To be discussed at the meeting 17 February 2009.