Recipe for Successful Placements

Enjoy your placement – it’s the beginning of your nursing career. Placements are fun.

Make placements a positive experience for others as well as you.

Prepare for Your Placement
Have a look at the placement website.

Whilst there:
- Check what type of placement it is
- Check the uniform/dress requirements for the placement
- Make sure you know how to get to the placement
- Get the phone number

Phone the placement at least a week before you start to get your off duty. If you don’t get an answer it’s worth visiting in person. If possible find out who your mentor is and make your face known.

Try and have an idea of what you want to achieve before you start, drawing from your previous placements.

Supernumerary Status
- Supernumerary status does not mean you don’t contribute to service delivery; you should never be “too posh to wash”.
- Be prepared to work as part of the team, but remember to use the placement to gain experience and learning.
- Negotiate time for collecting evidence and completing documentation to support outcomes.

Once on Placement

Mentor and Supervision
- Give lots of warning when you want to fill in and sign outcomes and proficiencies. It can take a lot of time and that needs to be factored into the shift. Mentors have a job to do, you are not their priority.
- There are lots of different personalities and people have different backgrounds – you won’t like everyone but you need to get along with them, it’s part of being professional.
• Don’t take everything to heart; you don’t know what might have happened to the mentor if they are snappy with you.
• Work in partnership with placement staff; learning is a two way process. Share your knowledge and experience just as mentors/placement staff share knowledge and experience with you.

Protecting Yourself and Your Colleagues
• Know your limitations and don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know can you show me or explain?” Remember the NMC Code.
• Don’t be afraid to ask questions even though you might feel the question is stupid.
• Don’t be afraid to say no if you don’t feel comfortable doing something, but be tactful, don’t put people’s backs up; this becomes easier with practice and experience.
• Think about your own capacity and progress; don’t expect to be doing the same as everyone else.
• Remember there might be times you are just an observer. Be patient, check out what you are allowed to do with your mentor. If unsure, get in touch with the PLT rep (education or practice).

Hours and Off Duty
• During your training you must:
  a. Do nights but only second semester onwards - only 3 in 6 weeks.
  b. Do weekends – one in four.
  c. Phone allocations and your placement if you are off sick. Making up time must be agreed with allocations and your personal tutor.
  d. Negotiate with your mentor about taking your breaks, and be flexible.
  e. Co-ordinate your shifts with other students; fewer students gives a better experience.

• In your first placement you can’t do 12 hour shifts. You can do no more than 3 x 12 hour shifts per week from semester 2
• Every hour on placement is an opportunity to learn. Make the most of it.

Support
• Be proactive arranging preliminary, intermediate and final interviews with mentors. Your mentor may forget about these when busy but they are really important to highlight what you still need to get out of the placement.
• Ask the mentor regularly what he/she expects from you.
• Always try to get an associate mentor allocated and get to know them as your mentor may go off sick; learn from them like you would your mentor.
• There is support out there if you need it – check the student support leaflet for details.
• Look to other students (buddy system) for support and advice (you could contact a student rep).

Paperwork
• Take completed reflective accounts and other pieces in as you go along for your mentor to sign them; it reduces your stress levels and those of your mentor.
• You should be allowed time within placement to complete documentation to support outcomes.
• Don’t keep masses of evidence. Link pieces of evidence to several outcomes/proficiencies.
• Get your mentor to sign all your evidence. Don’t leave placement before you get all your paperwork signed off.
• If your mentor looks at the paperwork and doesn’t understand it, get some help from the PLT/the school or the website.
• Confidentiality – don’t take handover sheets away from placement. Shred them at the end of the shift. Whatever you learn/get to know in placement stays in placement, do not discuss anything outside of placement.

Opportunities to Learn
• Work with care assistants (befrienders), especially in your first placement; they can teach you a lot of fundamental skills.
• Use time with the patient to learn from them about their care.
• Take opportunities to learn from everyone, other professionals and of course patients themselves about their care.
• Take ownership of your own learning, build relationships with all the team, and ask to accompany people on visits, shadow staff for variations in care delivery, record daily outcomes.
• Be positive and learn from others. Don’t complain or be judgemental; enjoy – it will go really quickly.
• When your mentor is not there – make sure you access other people.
• Be prepared; go on insight visits/shadow days with clear learning objectives for them. Read up on things. If it’s your first placement, get used to the placement first and stay in placement to get experience before you go on insight visits.
• Check policies and procedures.
• Link your theory knowledge to what you do in practice.

Top Tips
• Be proactive in everything.
• Try to be enthusiastic even if it is not a placement you picture yourself working in the future. It can be a lot of extra work for mentors to have a student working with them and it is very obvious if the student seems bored or otherwise preoccupied. This makes it even harder for them to be enthusiastic to teach you and there is always something to learn.
• Keep a notepad with you and take as many notes as you can at the time. Then when reflecting you can expand on your notes.
• It might be difficult to stand up and be assertive at times, but you will get better at this – you do need to look after yourself and your rights.
• Don’t wear your uniform outside of placement.

Please remember to evaluate your practice placement at:
www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/nursing/placements/index.aspx

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