

Levels of Supervision and Practice for Midwifery Students

The levels of supervision/support required for each of the three levels of practice (levels 4, 5 and 6) and the conditions of practice for the achievement of the standards of proficiency are explained here. This is followed by a discussion of the criteria to assess whether the student is '**Progressing**' in the standards of proficiency and performance outcomes at each level of practice, and the criteria to assess whether the standards of proficiency and performance outcomes at each level of practice have been '**Achieved**'.

Performance outcomes for each standard of proficiency have been developed to take into account the stage of development of the student midwife within each module of the programme, the level of supervision/support required, the level of practice and the conditions of expected competent practice. Performance outcomes have thus been developed to demonstrate the developmental interpretation of the standards of proficiency to reflect the progression the student midwife needs to make at each of the three levels of practice. Each standard of proficiency generally comprises several performance outcomes. A '**Pass**' must be achieved in each performance outcome to pass the standard of proficiency. The levels of supervision/support required for each level of practice and the conditions of expected competent practice at each level are summarised in the following table.

Conditions of Practice for the Achievement of the Standards of Proficiency

Academic Level	Level of Supervision/ Support	Level of Practice	Competence achieved	Competence NOT achieved
Level 4	Direct to close supervision	Observes, participates, assists in	Performs with few prompts Can explain the rationale underpinning practice	Requires detailed
Level 5	Close to minimal supervision	Active participation. Planning most activities and leading some	Performance is smooth and complete. Does not require prompting. Can explain the rationale underpinning practice and discuss pertinent research.	Performance lacks completeness. Requires to be prompted Cannot explain the rationale underpinning practice
Level 6	Minimal to indirect supervision	Active participation. Planning all activities and leading most	Does not require prompting. Is organised and efficient. Critiques evidence-based practice and its implementation.	Requires prompting. Unable to organise care. Does not consider evidence-based practice.

The levels of supervision, practice and conditions of competent practice

Level 4: The student requires direct to close supervision/support and is expected to observe, participate and assist in care.

What this means in practice:

Initially, the student will be observing how clinical activities are carried out. As a result of this, the student should be encouraged to participate when she is ready and you are also in agreement. As the student's ability and confidence develops, she can assist but not lead the activity. Clearly, the student is still under direct to close supervision. By the end of year one, the student should be demonstrating the ability to carry out practised activities with confidence and be expected to plan and lead certain practised activities with few prompts. Some basic care activities may be carried out with close to minimal supervision once you are sure of the student's

ability through direct observation. Also, it is vital that you check the student's understanding through careful questioning. The specific performance outcomes identified for each module should guide you as to which activities these could be in your clinical area.

Level 5: The student requires close to minimal supervision/support and is expected to participate actively as well as to be able to plan most activities and to lead some of them.

What this means in practice:

The level of supervision/support provided follows on from that which is required at the end of year one. As the student gains confidence, she should be able to carry out a wider range of care activities under minimal supervision. However, decisions concerning the degree of supervision should be based on a reasonable amount of prior direct observation of practice. You should also be confident that the student knows when to seek assistance from a midwife. Again, the student's knowledge and understanding should be assessed through question and answer as it is vital that she knows how to undertake care as well as know why that care is necessary.

Level 6: The student requires minimal to indirect supervision/support and is expected to participate actively as well as to be able to plan all activities and to lead most of them.

What this means in practice:

The level of supervision provided follows on from that which is required at the end of year two. Increasingly, the student should be able to use her initiative to recognise and meet the needs of clients. Supervision is indirect which means that although you are not observing the student directly, you are still aware of the activities of the student. At this stage, you should use questioning not only to test the student's knowledge and understanding of care activities, but also to ascertain how she would recognise changes in client needs. You should also question the student on how she would plan, prioritise and manage care and the rationale behind her decision-making.

By the end of year three, the student should be able to demonstrate all the competencies to the standard of a newly qualified practitioner. At the start of years two and three in the 3-year programme students are challenged to achieve a higher level of performance than previously required. Students may therefore take a little longer to progress on to the required level and may also require more support when doing so.

Criteria to assess whether the student is 'Progressing' in the standards of proficiency and performance and skills outcomes

In level 4 there is progression if the student is:

- Observing as well as participating and assisting in care, as appropriate
- Performing activities with less prompting
- Beginning to be able to explain the rationale underpinning practice

In level 5 there is progression if the student is:

- Beginning to participate actively in care, as appropriate
- Beginning to plan most activities, and leading some
- Performing activities with few prompts
- Explaining the rationale underpinning practice
- Beginning to discuss research pertinent to practice

In level 6 there is progression if the student is:

- Participating actively in care
- Planning most activities and leading many of them
- Performing activities without prompting
- Beginning to organise care and demonstrating a degree of efficiency
- Beginning to critique evidence-based practice
- Beginning to implement evidence-based practice

Criteria to assess whether the student has '**Achieved**' the standards of proficiency and performance and skills outcomes

In level 4 the student has achieved if she has:

- Participated and assisted in care, as appropriate
- Performed activities with few prompts, where appropriate
- Been able to explain the rationale underpinning practice, where appropriate
- Been able to provide the additional piece of evidence

In level 5 the student has achieved if she has:

- Participated actively in care, as appropriate
- Planned most activities, and led some
- Performed activities smoothly and completely, with no prompts, where appropriate
- Been able to explain the rationale underpinning practice, where appropriate
- Been able to discuss research pertinent to practice, where appropriate
- Been able to provide the additional piece of evidence

In level 6 the student has achieved if she has:

- Participated actively in care
- Planned all activities and led most
- Performed activities without prompting
- Been able to organise care and demonstrated efficiency when managing her workload
- Been able to critique evidence-based practice
- Been able to implement evidence-based practice
- Been able to provide the additional piece of evidence

N.B. Link Lecturers can be contacted at anytime to provide advice and support to both students and mentors during any part of the learning and assessment process.