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## AAPE UK Principles to support high quality Advanced Clinical Practice education.

The focus on Advanced Clinical Practice in all four countries of the United Kingdom has never been higher. From early programmes in the 1990's, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have played a key part in supporting this movement. As a result AAPE UK members now have significant expertise in delivering effective educational preparation for advanced clinical practice for nurses, allied health professionals and pharmacists. However, funding pressures and desires for “quick-fix” approaches to workforce challenges, risk under-valuing the importance that HEIs play in achieving ambitious targets for Advanced Practitioners in current healthcare policy.

With the proliferation of advanced practice education programmes and decades of experience in this area, it is now timely for AAPE UK to publish a set of principles to:

- Assist in the planning of new advanced clinical practice programmes
- Support advanced clinical practice programme validation, quality assurance processes and evaluative reviews
- Influence national and local policy and frameworks related to advanced clinical practice
- Enable preparation of highly qualified, competent, capable healthcare professionals to work at an advanced level of clinical practice.

In preparing this document, AAPE UK has drawn from the international pioneering work in this area by the National Organisation of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF, 2016). While the Quality Assurance Agency sets standards for Higher Education, there are important subject specific aspects

that need explicit consideration to ensure high standards of advanced clinical practice are established and upheld. These are provided within this document.

## **Philosophical underpinning**

Effective education for advanced clinical practice relies on establishment of a partnership between the student, work-place and the HEI, with the beneficial impact on the patient's care and experience as the central goal.

## **Organisation, Administration and Resources**

- The ACP programme team\* is of sufficient size to adequately support effective delivery of the curriculum and associated student support and assessment.
- Experienced advanced practitioners are part of the team and contribute to overall leadership, curriculum development and delivery of the programme.
- Where specific pathways are provided, this expertise is reflected in the programme delivery team.
- Student selection, progression and award decisions are made by the ACP programme team who understand the expected level and professional requirements for advanced clinical practice.
- Strategies for recognition for prior learning are maximised to optimise demonstration of experiential learning and transferability in recognition of on-going challenges of continuing professional development funding and release for study.
- Criteria for acceptance onto ACP programmes, includes review of the current employment context and exploration of the intentions for service development to maximise the benefits of advanced practice to patient care.
- Staff to student ratio for clinical teaching is sufficient to ensure adequate supervision and evaluation.

- Clinical teaching facilities, equipment and resources are sufficient to support student learning.
- The HEI should ensure that the Lecturers who teach clinical components are enabled to maintain currency in clinical practice.
- Representatives from the ACP programme team participate in local and national networks to promote and share good practice.
- The ACP programme lead liaises regularly with local education commissions and workforce planners to influence decision-making and respond to changing demands.

## Curriculum

- The ACP programme team lead on the development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum.
- The curriculum is congruent with national standards for advanced practice evidenced through mapping against the programme outcomes and/or modules to demonstrate where each aspect is taught, developed and assessed.
- The curriculum is informed by relevant regulatory body and professional body standards and policy.
- The curriculum develops the four pillars of advanced practice; clinical, leadership and management, education and research.
- Strategies are in place to ensure that content reflects contemporary clinical practice, current health and social care policy and national and international advanced practice research.
- Expectations of students in regard to the ACP programme are clear from the outset.
- The curriculum demonstrates appropriate sequencing to promote the development of advanced clinical practice across the programme.
- Student support arrangements account for academic, clinical and professional aspects.
- Triangulation through use of a range of reliable and valid assessment strategies is used to increase the rigour and ensure “fitness for practice” and “fitness for purpose”. These are likely to include assignments, case studies/reports, exams, projects, presentations, practical assessments such as OSCEs (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations) and direct observation of clinical skills, and a comprehensive portfolio.

- Assessors include members of the ACP programme team and other healthcare professionals who are competent and experienced at the required level and who have been suitably prepared for the purpose.
- Student progression is reviewed regularly, in conjunction with the workplace, to ensure cumulative development of competence and capability, with an action plan established if issues arise.
- Simulation is used to supplement work based learning experiences.
- The curriculum provides inter-professional learning opportunities. This is recognised as important for all healthcare education but is particularly relevant for the multi-professional focus of advanced clinical practice developments.
- Strategies are in place for service-user input into student selection, programme delivery, assessment outcomes and programme evaluation.
- Any student, who is unsuccessful and withdrawn from the programme at an Exam Board, has an exit-meeting with a representative of the ACP programme team to ensure they have taken on board the feedback arising from the course and are aware of their professional accountability.
- Evaluation takes place to review the impact of the programme on graduate employability, promotion and other relevant aspects.

### **Work based learning**

- The expectations of employing organisations are to be clear from the outset.
- Student review of learning opportunities and potential barriers within the workplace setting is facilitated at the start of the programme to promote the optimal environment.
- Work based learning is to be regularly monitored by the ACP programme team, with strategies in place to intervene where issues arise.
- Strategies are used to ensure that student experiences are diverse and sufficient to meet the curriculum requirements.

- Each student has a designated Supervisor for the duration of the programme to provide the overview for the students' development as a whole. The level for the Supervisor should be stipulated at a minimum of senior qualified practitioner or specialist registrar level.
- Guidance for Supervisors is provided on requirements and expectations of the role.
- Other experienced competent healthcare professionals support additional experiences to achieve multi-professional, collaborative learning.
- Guidance is provided by the HEI on learning experiences can be utilised beyond the work place to add breadth to knowledge and skill development, such as visiting specialist clinics, joining outreach teams, shadowing other advanced practitioners.
- Evaluation of work based learning for individual students or groups takes place periodically and any issues are raised with appropriate personnel in a timely manner.

\*The term "Advanced Clinical Practice (ACP) programme team" is used to describe the academic staff and Lecturer/Practitioners who deliver the course.

Katrina Maclaine

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