

If you are an Employer and you are thinking about Returning to Practice, you may have a number of questions. Below are a number of questions with answers which we hope you find useful.

## **Programme**

What will the Return to Practice programme look like? How many taught days are there?

How long will the programme take and is there a full time and part time version?

The theoretical element of the Return to Practice programme is delivered at the Glenside and Gloucestershire Campuses for UWE and at Plymouth University. The programme is taught over 6 days, with a few additional days for blended learning (tutorials and seminars) and involves a variety of learning activities that are mapped against the NMC's return to practice outcomes. <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Registration/Returning-to-the-register/> The returnee will undertake practice hours in relation to the length of time they have been absent from practice. They will require a sign off mentor and the aim is that the returnee will completed the practice competences within 14weeks.

Successful completion of the Return to Practice programme requires the assessment of both theory and practice to the NMC competency standards in the practice setting and passing a written assessment and numeracy test.

The programme has the theory element front loaded and is flexible so that the returnee is able to work full or part time in their placement area.

The length of the programme will depend on the returnees experience and their length of time out of practice. It will also depend on the number of hours they are able to spend each week in their placement area, this allows for flexibility for both the employer and returnee.

The minimum length of the programme from the first day of the course to point of reregistration is 22 weeks

The maximum length of the programme from the first day of the course to point of reregistration is 45 weeks.

What mandatory training is covered by a Return to Practice course?

There is the 6 days theoretical learning at the university, alongside induction training at the placement which is usually about three days on top of the practice hours they will then carry out on the placement, HEIs will support the employer if they don't offer induction training. HEIs will need the induction dates to fit around the programme they will have set up.

## **Process**

How will employers and returnees receive information on Return to Practice in the South West?

HESW and the Universities will provide consistent information on all three websites:

Health Education South West: <http://southwest.hee.nhs.uk/ourwork/return-to-practice/>

Plymouth University: <http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=38646>

The University of the West of England: <http://courses.uwe.ac.uk/UZUSBC203/2014#entry> <http://courses.uwe.ac.uk/UZUSCR203/2014#entry>

**How will organisations access the funding for Return to Practice?**

HESW will pay organisations once the Universities have confirmed who have started on the course and where the placement organisations are based. All payments will be clearly labelled.

**I want a Return to Practice returnee who do I need to contact?**

After confirming details of the vacancy within your organisation, you will need to contact Rachel Roberts at HESW- [rachel.roberts@southwest.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:rachel.roberts@southwest.hee.nhs.uk); who will note your requirement for a place on a particular cohort at the relevant University and confirm your allocation. Please refer to the Education Demand/Allocation Process Timetable available on the Health Education South West website. <http://southwest.hee.nhs.uk/ourwork/return-to-practice/>

**If demand exceeds commissioned numbers will the commissioned numbers increase?**

Demand from service will be closely monitored. Growing the nursing numbers is a priority for South West LETB, this will be regularly reviewed and dependent on budgets both locally and nationally.

**How will employers know if there are places available on the course?**

Through the Education Demand/Allocation process, employers will be made aware of places available for them on the course/cohort. HESW will also sense check that allocated numbers are still required by the employers. The annual intake numbers letter that comes out on the 31st December each year will also include these figures. <http://southwest.hee.nhs.uk/files/2013/12/Timetable-RtP-14-to-16-v2.pdf>

**If our organisation only wants to support the May/June cohort, how can we guarantee our places?**

Organisations will need to respond to a demand/allocation collection process and its timetable. We are keen to ensure equity of access and numbers will be allocated to accommodate organisations as fairly as possible.

**What information should I include in an advertisement?**

Suggested content for a Return to Practice advertisement:

- Interview date
- Application procedure
- Cohort/programme start date

- Which University is providing the Return to Practice programme.
- If the vacancy is employed, a training vacancy or 'may lead to' employment.
- Contact details at the employer organisation
- What setting the placement will cover e.g. neonatal departments or GP surgery.
- The tuition fees are funded by HESW.
- The returnee will receive a bursary from HESW
- Universities will have a timetable/plan of what a usual student's progression through the course looks like, so that employers can signpost potential returnees to this. Plymouth University link is: <http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=38646> .The University of the West of England links are: <http://courses.uwe.ac.uk/UZUSBC203/2014#entry> , <http://courses.uwe.ac.uk/UZUSCR203/2014#entry>

What happens if the Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) checks do not go through in time for the returnee to start on a cohort?  
 This will need to be discussed between the employer, University and HESW. The options could include:  
 The returnee starting the cohort if the programme structure starts with a theory element or reallocating the returnee to the next cohort.

## **Pay and Employment**<sub>[VF(ESW1)]</sub>

How can we as an organisation attract Return to Practice returnees?

It will be up to each employer to try and make their vacancy as attractive to returnees as possible; this may include different employment options. Some organisations may offer employment, perhaps as an HCA alongside the placement, whilst others may wish to guarantee, dependent upon successful completion of the Return to Practice programme, a nursing position either on the bank or permanently. University's will assist in the marketing by displaying return to practice opportunities/information at Open Days and on the website

If we offer employment alongside the Return to Practice programme could this impact upon the hours in placement for Return to Practice and/or their employed hours?

Employers/returnees may need to be flexible to accommodate the Return to Practice process and the NMC requirements. Both the employers and the returnee will need to be clear on all requirements.

How will HR link the training post with the Band 5 vacancy contracts?

It will be for each employer to decide how they might link training with a vacancy.

Some employers will offer employment alongside the Return to Practice programme and placement, but some organisations are unable to do this, why would a returnee want to apply to an organisation which does not offer employment?

Returnees will weigh up a number of factors when applying for vacancies. Additional employment can be attractive to returnees, however other

factors also high on the list are:

- Job satisfaction;
- An employer's reputation;
- Flexible working patterns;
- Home to organisation travel time;
- Where the vacancy setting is Primary care, Neonatal etc.

## Price

How much will it cost to put somebody through a Return to Practice Programme?

Following the allocation of a place at one of the two Universities and the recruitment of an individual to that place, Health Education South West will fund the programme. They will also provide a placement fee to the organisation and a returnee bursary to support the returnee through the programme.

## Placement

My organisation is not currently being used as a placement. What are the requirements? Will placement audit be provided by the University?

In accordance with NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council) Quality Assurance Framework, it is a requirement for all placements to have an educational audit process that will support an effective practice learning culture.

Your proposed placement area will need to undergo an educational audit if it currently does not have one. This is carried out by a University representative and a representative from your practice area. The audit takes approximately 2 hours and will assess the learning opportunities and support available for the returnee. Each returnee will need a mentor and will work with their mentor for 40% of their clinical placement. The returnee has a protected one hour per week to work with their sign off mentor.

What qualifications does a sign-off mentor need?

The NMC state that "the Sign off Mentor is the person who makes the judgements about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice and for their entrance to the register."

The mentor working with a Return to Practice student in their placement area takes the responsibility for saying that the student is ready to become registered or re-registered in relation to the practice component of the course.

Who is/can be a sign off mentor?

Placement providers must ensure that a sign off mentor is:-

- identified on the local register as a sign off mentor or a practice teacher
- registered on the same part of the register as the returnee
- working in the same field of practice as that in which the student intends to qualify
- have clinical currency and capability in the field of practice in which the student is being assessed
- met the NMC requirements to remain on the local register
- been supervised on at least three occasions for signing off proficiency at the end of a final placement by an existing sign off mentor or practice teacher
- a working knowledge of current programme requirements, practice assessment strategies and relevant changes in education and practice for the student they are assessing
- an understanding of the NMC registration requirements and the conditions the contribution they make to meeting these requirements
- an in depth understanding of their accountability to the NMC for the decisions they make to pass or fail a student when assessing proficiency

For further information see the NMC Web site <http://www.nmc-uk.org>

**How long does it take to train a mentor?**

An NMC mentor is a registrant who has been on the register for at least a year and who has completed an NMC approved mentor preparation programme. A local register of mentors is kept and mentors have to provide evidence of competence and remaining professionally up to date to remain on the register.

The Facilitating Learning and Assessment in Practice (FLAP) course is taught over 3 days (approx. length of course 5 months).

Sign off mentors have to meet the additional requirements listed previously.

**If an organisation does not have a sign-off mentor on site, can they still have a Return to Practice returnee?**

The HEIs will work together to discuss and develop options for situations where the organisation does not have a sign off mentor. Consideration will need to be made of the NMC requirements. There are many ways of managing this and developing sign off mentors. However if the organisation/placement has a mentor it may be possible for a sign off mentor from another area to complete the 'sign off' requirements in conjunction with the mentor and support the mentor in becoming a sign off mentor.

**Who signs off the returnee's placement?**

It is the responsibility of the mentor and sign off mentor to assess the returnee against the NMC competencies during their placement. However any difficulties or concerns should be managed jointly with a university representative.

What determines how many hours the returnee needs to complete? Is it dictated by the University, the NMC, the employer or the returnee?

The period of time for supervised clinical practice will be discussed and agreed at interview as this can depend upon the number of years that the returnee has been out of clinical practice, what employment history the returnee has, and whether they have been working as an assistant or support role within a health care environment before application. A suggested guide for negotiating hours and days that are needed to be assessed as competent and confident to return to practice has been informed by the guidance published by the Department of Health (DH, 2011).

<b>Years out of practice</b>	<b>Guidance for hours for nurses</b>	<b>Guidance for hours for Health Visitors</b>	<b>Guidance for hours for Midwives</b>
5-10	minimum practice hours required = 100 (maximum 200)	minimum practice hours required = 150 (maximum 250)	450
11-20	minimum practice hours required = 200 (maximum 300)	minimum practice hours required = 300 (maximum 400)	450
>20	minimum practice hours required = 300 (maximum 400)	minimum practice hours required = 450 (maximum 550)	450