

EFAD Practice Placement Standards

2022





Background

The initial placement standard document was published in 2010 and has been updated to reflect current practice. However, the main themes and components regarding placement Quality Assurance processes remain relevant.

Overview

The European Practice Placement Standards for Dietetics outlines 14 standards linked to the following essential components for effective and productive experiential learning experiences in the practice setting:

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The EFAD Practice Placement Standards were revised by the European Federation of Associations of Dietitians Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in 2022.





1. Practice Placement Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe what the student should be able to do at the end of the period of study when assessed. Since practice placements are an integral part of any programme leading to qualification as a dietitian, what is being assessed should be carefully considered and approved. Learning outcomes for placement allow students to understand what is expected of them. The number, duration and range of practice placements vary between programmes, but must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of learning outcomes. The Awarding Institution (Higher Educational Institute, HEI) must ensure that these learning outcomes are in place for the period(s) of practice placement. The learning outcomes must be carefully worded and clearly defined, so that they are clear to all stakeholders (practice educators, students, and university/HEI tutors). A constructive alignment between learning outcomes, activities and assessment should be coherent.

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| <p>Standard 1 Learning outcomes must be set for (each of) the practice placement(s) and must demonstrate how they contribute to the programme aims.</p> <p>Standard 2 The learning outcomes must be clear to the practice placement educator, student, and practice placement teachers.</p> <p>Standard 3 Assessment should be aligned to the learning outcomes.</p> |
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Examples from Belgium, UK, Spain, Austria and Portugal will be available on the website.





2. Responsibilities of the partners working together

It is vital that the roles and responsibilities are clear for all partners (HEI, students, practice placement educator).

The awarding institution (HEI) and the placement partner must discuss and agree in advance how they will provide support and guidance for students on placement. Information, support, and guidance materials should be developed in consultation with partners. All partners should have the placement learning outcomes, requirements, and guiding materials.

A practice placement handbook for student assessors is a useful resource. It should contain details of the roles and responsibilities of various parties, together with all the report forms required to be completed on individual student progression and detail any placement feedback about the students to the university for audit of placement experience. There is usually a checklist of areas the student should be given feedback on.

There should be a formal legal document for internal regulation that clearly explains the commitment and responsibilities expected from all parties involved.

This document should include: the expected learning outcomes, assessment details, student support mechanisms especially when students struggle and professional expectations including procedures about absence and fitness to practice (conduct and ethics).

Standard 4 All parties will agree on the roles and responsibilities of each other with respect to achieving a quality student learning experience.

Standard 5 Information, support and guidance materials for students will be available (having been developed by the practice placement partners and Awarding Institutions (HEIs) in partnership).

Standard 6 The Awarding Institution (HEI) is responsible for the placement and must have policies and procedures by which it is able to satisfy itself regarding
i) the appropriate standards for the approval of practice placement and
ii) the ongoing quality assurance regarding of the delivery of learning.





Standard 7 The practice placement is a partner in the delivery of the dietetics programme and must have a formal agreement of the roles and responsibilities, including termination of an agreement.

Standard 8 Early warning systems of potential difficulties with the placement opportunity or student progress must be clearly articulated.

Example of quality assurance processes and placement handbooks will be made available on the website (from Austria and UK).





3. Training and support for practice placement partners

Awarding Institutions (HEIs) are required to ensure that all the staff who are involved in preparing students for placement or are facilitating student learning on placement:

- ▶ are appropriately qualified, and have some post-graduation experience (ideally having worked for at least 6 months-one years in the dietetic field)
- ▶ have been provided with adequate resources and support to undertake the role.
- ▶ have appropriate monitoring mechanisms to demonstrate ongoing practice partner competence (e.g., via engagement with training)

Regular training provision to support student placement learning is required for new staff (HEI and placement teachers) at various levels. New graduate support and placement leads ongoing training should be provided by the HEI. This can be compulsory or complementary. Recording training sessions allows staff to catch up if unable to attend. It is helpful to track attendance and engagement e.g., if staff access the recording, request they send a confirmation email to that they have listened and understood the content. Covering challenging scenarios in small groups allows collegial discussion, sharing experience and reflection. Evaluation and feedback from the training sessions from participants allows the HEI to tailoring future content and delivery approaches.

Standard 9 The Awarding Institution (HEI) should provide appropriate support and periodic training for the practice placement teachers and HEI staff (in person and/or virtual).

Standard 10 HEI staff should be offered lifelong learning opportunities, in the form of relevant training, to support their professional development and ensure their competence to undertake placement responsibilities, of providing consistent, high-quality support to students.

Examples of Training policies and Programmes of training will be provided on the website (from Austria and UK).





4. Supervision of students

During the placement it is essential that students are provided with regular feedback session with the supervisor. Discussion with the supervisor will expect the student to demonstrate reflective practice to support critical thinking and personal development. Hence reflection should have been taught by the HEI prior to the placement

Regular feedback sessions with a supervisor before and during and after the practical placement, are required to support student self-awareness regarding progress in relation to the end learning outcomes and reflection.

A halfway assessment with a formal report form is also helpful to clarify areas requiring targeted practice during the remainder of the placement. Training for practice partners should cover how the partner reports student progress to the HEI. Supervision is normally conducted in person, but use of virtual means such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams or long arm supervision by a university tutor may be in place.

Standard 11 Students should be taught the process and role/value of reflection, by the HEI, prior to placement.

Standard 12 Procedures for monitoring and reporting student progress should be in place.

Examples of reflection assessment tools and other resources will be provided on the website.





5. Monitoring and evaluation of the student experience

Process and procedures to facilitate sharing of information on quality and standards should be available. Further, there should be mechanisms for adopting best practice and improvements on a regular basis. Open and honest sharing of challenging student situations and lessons learned is important, as well as celebrating student successes and innovations or new placement activities or emerging role placements.

Standard 13 Regular planned meetings between the practice placement partners and awarding institution, with student involvement, should be used to improve quality and advance understanding of the effectiveness of placement learning.

Standard 14 Monitoring and evaluation should be shown to bring added benefit and improvement to the development of the profession and academia.

Examples of placement audit cycles and evaluation processes will be available on the website.





SUMMARY

In conclusion Standards 1-10 will ensure preparation is in place to support students to achieve their potential. The remaining Standards cover important aspects of delivery. Students find placement both interesting and motivating and stressful as they are pushed out of their comfort zone to apply dietetic knowledge. It is essential to ensure that placement processes are as streamlined as possible for busy practice partners and is fit for purpose from the student perspective. Comprehensive inclusive planning, accessible documentation and an annual quality assurance process will help ensure delivery of acceptable quality and support ongoing refinement and enhancement.

