

Revalidation for practice nurses: A guide for employers

The purpose of revalidation is to improve public protection by making sure that nurses and midwives demonstrate their continued ability to practise safely and effectively throughout their career (Nursing and Midwifery Council)

This guide explains the NMC Revalidation processes for the employers of Practice Nurses. It answers Frequently Asked Questions, offers advice and suggests further sources of information.

What is revalidation?

The Francis Report (2013) recommended that the NMC should introduce a system of revalidation for nursing, it recommended that:

“..the Nursing and Midwifery Council introduces a system of revalidation similar to that of the General Medical Council, as a means of reinforcing the status and competence of registered nurses, as well as providing additional protection to the public”

Agreed and finalised by the NMC in October 2015, the revalidation process starts in April 2016. The process is similar to that of the GMC but differs in some key respects. The process has been designed so that it can be undertaken as part of a regular appraisal, although the two processes are separate and it is important to distinguish between the two and identify areas for development and improvement. Each nurse should be required to demonstrate up-to-date knowledge of nursing practice and its implementation, and demonstrate commitment, compassion and caring for patients, evidenced by feedback /reflection/CPD/practice hours – all related to the NMC Code.

It is a continuous process that will last throughout a nurse's career. Revalidation aims to give extra confidence to patients that nurses adhere to the NMC Code. It also provides an opportunity for employers and organisations to undertake a wider assessment of the quality and assurance systems they have in place (NMC 2015).

The revalidation process is based upon the NMC's *Code of Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses and midwives* (2015). The Code is based on four principles:

1. Prioritise people
2. Practise effectively
3. Preserve safety
4. Promote professionalism and trust.

It is anticipated that revalidation will have a range of benefits for all of nursing's stakeholders as indicated by the NMC diagram:



The anticipated benefits of revalidation

For the public:

- Provide confidence that nurses and midwives are up to date in terms of their skills and professional development
- Provide assurance that nurses and midwives are being regularly reviewed

For nurses and midwives:

- Raise awareness of the Code and standards that are expected of nurses and midwives
- Encourage a culture of sharing, reflection and continuous improvement
- Encourage nurses to stay up to date in their professional practice

For employers:

- Increase confidence that their staff practise safely and effectively
- Encourage more consistent participation in appraisal and professional development
- Help clarify the nature and scope of investment required in CPD

For the NMC:

- Help to strengthen our regulation of nurses and midwives
- Help to raise standards of practice
- Provide more insight into how nursing and midwifery professions are practising

Table 1: The anticipated benefits of revalidation: <http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/revalidation/>

The benefits of revalidation

The NMC commissioned an evaluation of the revalidation process from a range of pilot sites. The evaluation revealed that nurses found the process to be a force for professionalism and staff at the pilot sites found the process both positive and achievable; it was found that a number of organisations used revalidation as an opportunity to develop or embed good HR / staffing practices. In addition, it is believed that revalidation will have a range of benefits for the employers of nurses; it is anticipated that revalidation will enhance employers' engagement with the nurses they employ. Revalidation can help boost employers' confidence that their employees are practising safely and effectively and that their practice is up to date. In addition, it encourages early discussions about practice concerns before they escalate and increase access to and participation in appraisal and professional development. Ultimately revalidation will improve patient care and outcomes.

Case Study 1

Bridget is a Practice Nurse who works for Janet, a very busy single-handed General Practitioner and she has found it a challenge at times to engage with CPD. She is concerned about meeting the NMC's requirement of 35 hours of CPD over three years. Bridget meets with Janet to discuss practical ways of meeting the requirement. Together they establish that if Bridget attended the local Practice Nurse Forum every two months that would accumulate to 10 hours of participatory CPD annually. In addition, a study day at the local University would help meet the NMC requirement.

As an employer, how can I support revalidation?

Each individual Registered Nurse is responsible for ensuring he/she meets the NMC's revalidation requirements; however, it is very helpful to all stakeholders if nurse employers take an interest in and are supportive of their nurse employees undertaking the revalidation process. This means understanding:

1. the NMC The Code (2015)
 2. what the revalidation process involves
 3. the activities and support nurses may need to meet the requirements.
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The Revalidation Process

There are eight separate elements to the revalidation process:

NMC Revalidation requirements

1. Minimum **450 HOURS' PRACTICE** over three years or 900 hours' practice to register as both a nurse and midwife.
2. Minimum **35 HOURS OF CPD**, 20 of which are 'participatory'.
3. Obtain at least **FIVE PIECES OF PRACTICE-RELATED FEEDBACK**
4. Record at least **FIVE WRITTEN REFLECTIONS** on feedback, CPD and/or The Code
5. Have a **REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION** about the above with another NMC registrant
6. Have an **INDEMNITY** arrangement in place
7. Confirm **GOOD HEALTH AND CHARACTER**
8. Obtain **CONFIRMATION FROM AN APPROPRIATE THIRD PARTY** that the nurse has met the revalidation requirements.

The above requirements must be met during the three years since the nurses' registration was last renewed or when they joined the register. Once they have collected evidence that they have met these requirements, nurses need to have a confirmation discussion in which they demonstrate to an appropriate Confirmer that the requirements have been met.

Nurses are expected to obtain confirmation during the final 12 months of their revalidation application date. It can sometimes get confusing with nurses having to participate in a yearly 'renewal of your registration' also known as annual retention' <http://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/staying-on-the-register/renewing-your-registration/> the revalidation application date the dates are different. The revalidation application date will be the 1st day of the month whereas nurses' annual renewal date will be the last day of the month. For nurses to be clear about their revalidation and renewal of registration dates they must log on to the NMC Online website. The last day of the month in which their registration expires is their renewal date. Nurses can check their renewal date via NMC Online. Employers can check the renewal date for the nurses they employ via the NMC Employer Confirmation Service www.nmc.org.uk/employer-confirmations

You may be asked to be the Confirmer for Practice Nurses.

Confirmation: The Role of the Confirmer

As well as providing support to the nurses you employ as they go through the revalidation process, you could also be asked to act as a confirmer and decide whether a nurse has met the revalidation requirements. Nurses can choose who their confirmer is, but it is expected that nurses will seek confirmation from an appropriate person. A line manager is an appropriate confirmer, and the NMC strongly recommends that nurses obtain confirmation from their line manager wherever possible. Confirmation by an appropriate person provides an additional degree of assurance that a nurse has met the revalidation requirements. Confirmation also increases professionalism by making nurses more accountable for their practice and improvement. It encourages those nurses who work in isolation from other colleagues to discuss their development, feedback, reflections and revalidation with another person. For line managers, it will encourage you to regularly consider and discuss how your nurses are engaging in professional development activities to maintain and develop their competence, and improve their practice.

If you are a healthcare professional regulated in the UK and you work with nurses, you might be the most appropriate person to provide their confirmation. You will need to provide details of your profession and your registration number (in some professions this may be known as a registration identification number or registration reference number) for your regulatory body.

If you are asked to take on this role make sure you read the NMC's information for confirmers www.nmc.org.uk/confirmation

Reflective Discussion: Discussion with a NMC Registrant

In addition, nurses will need to have a professional discussion with an NMC registrant in order to meet the revalidation requirements. This requirement will encourage a culture of sharing, reflection and improvement. It will enable nurses to discuss their professional development and will ensure that nurses do not practise in professional isolation.

Case Study 2

Anya works in a practice that has been intending to replace an informal annual catch up meeting with a structured appraisal system. In the light of the NMC revalidation process, the practice has implanted a new appraisal system. Anya has her appraisal with John, one of the partners. In line with advice from the NMC, John offers to be Anya's confirmer as it can be helpful to include a revalidation discussion at each annual appraisal so that Anya can keep John updated on her revalidation progress.

Good practice in supporting nurses

There are a number of ways in which you can support nurses during the revalidation process.

1. **Identifying** when your nurses need to revalidate and renew their registration - they won't all be at the same time
2. Holding **regular discussions** with your Practice Nurses about their preparations for revalidation. Your interest in revalidation will help provide a positive working environment and support nurses as they prepare to revalidate.
3. Ensuring the availability of **information technology** for nursing staff to use NMC Online such as tablets, phones and computers
4. Incorporating appropriate elements of revalidation, such as the confirmation process, within **staff appraisal**. The NMC strongly recommends that, where possible, the confirmation discussion forms part of nurses' annual appraisal. It might be helpful to include a revalidation discussion at each annual appraisal so that the nurse can keep their confirmer updated on the progress made toward meeting the revalidation requirements, although this is not essential.
5. Providing **space and time** for your nurses to hold their reflective discussions and confirmation discussions (if separate from an appraisal process)
6. Allowing **access to feedback** where it already exists (including audits, satisfaction surveys, complaints and the nurse's individual appraisal)
7. Discussing **areas for improvement and development** issues with the Practice Nurse and supporting their professional activities and professional development
8. Linking how revalidation can be linked to **supervision** – clinical and non-clinical.

Case Study 3

Raj is a senior partner in a large group practice which employs several Practice Nurses some of whom work part-time, others full-time. At a practice meeting, it is decided to appoint Tricia, one of the full-time Practice Nurses, as the Revalidation Lead. In order to strengthen the educational culture in the practice, Tricia and Sean establish weekly Clinical Update meetings.

The agenda for the meetings includes:

- Protocol updating
- New clinical guidelines

- The identification of staff learning needs with recommendations as to how they can be met
- Staff feedback from attending CPD events

The agenda of this meeting indicates that this meeting will help nurses keep their knowledge up to date and therefore will count towards their CPD hours.

Other supportive measures

Some employers will want to encourage a culture of learning and use the introduction of revalidation as an opportunity to strengthen their own processes. They may choose to put other additional supportive measures in place but these are not essential for nurses to revalidate. Employers need to take care that any processes they put in place are helpful, facilitative and consistent with the emphasis that revalidation places on nurses taking responsibility for meeting the NMC's requirements. Such processes might include:

- Training staff to support revalidation
- The development of e-portfolios
- Additional local supportive material to sit alongside the NMC guidance
- Seminars, study sessions and 'revalidation champions' to share information with all nurses.

One way that employers might consider supporting their nurses is by providing an e-portfolio system for them to keep their evidence that they have met the revalidation requirements. Please note that keeping a portfolio is recommended, but is not a requirement of revalidation. If you decide to provide this service you need to be aware that there are data protection implications. The NMC has designed forms that nurses must use to record their reflective discussion and confirmation. Nurses must make sure that these three forms are completed, stored or shared in manual, paper form, not electronically. This is important because creating, storing or sharing these data by electronic means may trigger an obligation to register with the Information Commissioner.

Concerns

If you, as an employer, become aware of a serious concern about the fitness to practise of a nurse you should raise it promptly through the NMC's fitness to practise procedures. Revalidation does not create a new way of raising a fitness to practise concern about a nurse, and the confirmation stage of revalidation does not involve making a judgment as to whether a nurse is fit to practise. For further details please visit www.nmc.org.uk/concerns-nurses-midwives/what-we-do/what-isfitness-to-practise.

You can find out how to make a referral at: www.nmc.org.uk/report-nurse-midwife

Further information can be found at:

NHS Employers <http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/retain-and-improve/standards-and-assurance/professional-regulation/nursing-revalidation>

NMC <http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/revalidation/revalidation-for-employers/>
