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**BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (BASW)**

**PRACTICE EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (PEPS) FOR SOCIAL WORK FAQ**

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| **RATIONALE FOR PEPS FAQ** |

**BASW completed the refreshed PEPS standards in July 2019. The guidance document has now been widely circulated within the social work profession and will be fully implemented by PEPS programme providers in September 2020. The document provides refreshed standards and values, guidance for the delivery of PE courses including curriculum content, eligibility and the importance of support for social workers responsible for the teaching, supervising and assessing of social work students in practice.**

**The BASW PEPS working group, who designed and then co-ordinated the completion of the revised PEPS document, have continued to collaborate widely with social work colleagues, including HEI’s who agreed to implement the refreshed standards early. There have been supplementary issues and queries arising from the PEPS document. It was agreed that a follow-up FAQ leaflet would provide a helpful format for capturing frequently asked questions raised by social work colleagues.**

**For ease of reference the individual questions and responses in the FAQ have been cross-referenced, where possible, to the relevant section of the PEPS document.**

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| **FAQ THEMES** |

**The questions that have been raised and collated have been separated into 5 different themes, ROLES, STUDENTS, COURSE CURRICULUM, COURSE DESIGN/LEVEL, CPD.**

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| **ROLES** |

**Questions Responses**

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| **How are the Mentor and Assessor roles differentiated when carried out by two people? (ref. glossary page 3).**  **PEPS Mentor/Assessors need to have significant experience of supervising at least 5 students before taking up the role; can this be broadened to include responsibility for supervising other social work learners? (ref. 3.3, page 14).** | **Arrangements for Mentor and Assessor roles will be different across PEPS programmes. Some in-house courses may allocate a person from their Higher Education team to take on the mentoring role who may not be a qualified social worker or PEPS practice educator. If this is the case it is vital that the Assessor is PEPS 2 qualified.**  **Many HEI’s tend to combine the roles to be carried out by one person, who is qualified at PEPS 2 level or equivalent.**  **It is important that the Mentor and Assessor roles are clearly differentiated if two people are allocated, and that there are opportunities for close working and sharing of feedback about the progress of the PEPS trainee.**  **During the PEPS refresh consultation process it was recognised that many qualified and experienced practice educators wanting to progress to the PE Mentor/Assessor role have supervised a combination of both students and newly qualified social workers. Therefore section 3.3 of the PEPS document should now refer to practice educators having significant experience of supervising at least 5 ‘learners’ which will include students and possibly also other learners.** |
| **‘PEPS 1 trainees will need to have their assessment decision ratified and overseen by a PEPS 2 qualified Mentor or Assessor’; what does this mean in practice? (ref. 3.2, page 13).** | **The PEPS Mentor/Assessor will have the responsibility of directly supervising, mentoring and assessing the PEPS 1 trainee. In practice this includes observing their supervision with the student, making a judgement on written assessments, including the final placement report, to agree if the decision is justified. Assessment of capability will be made against the PCF domains.**  **There will be variations to the role across PEPS programmes, but there is a requirement for PEPS 2 qualified Mentor/Assessors to endorse and oversee the PEPS 1 trainee’s assessment decision.** |
| **Are there limitations to the remit of a social worker who has completed PEPS stage 1 and gains PE status as compared to a stage 2 qualified PE? (ref. 3.2, page 13).** | **PEPS 1 qualified practice educators may take on the OSS role for a student to gain further experience before completing PEPS 2 or may supervise and assess a student during their first placement.**  **PEPS 1 practice educators do not have as wide a remit as PEPS 2 and can only independently assess students in their first placements.** |
| **‘The On-Site-Supervisor should be working towards PEPS 1 learning outcomes’; what training and support is available? (ref. 3.15, page 17).** | **HEI’s run a range of different short courses for OSS which should be aligned with PCF and PEPS learning outcomes. Some of these courses are certificated or accredited and designed as an introduction to PEPS.**  **Further work is needed to streamline the training and support available, as currently this is variable across the UK.** |
| **A social worker applying to do PEPS needs to be working at PCF Experienced Social Work Level. What does this mean in practice? (ref. 3.1, page 13).** | **A social worker needs to be endorsed by their employer as meeting level 7 of the PCF progression level diagram (**[**www.basw.co.uk/pcf**](http://www.basw.co.uk/pcf) **) In practice the applicant will have at least 2 years post-qualifying experience and have experience of managing a diverse and complex case load, be able to make decisions, work effectively in partnership with others and ideally have been involved in supporting newly qualified social workers.**  **It is vital that social workers interested in applying to do PEPS training have knowledge and understanding of what this entails, and the level of commitment required.** |

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| **SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS** |

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| **What is the impact for a PEPS trainee if their student’s placement is paused or terminated?** | **If a student’s placement breaks down in the early stages of the placement it may be possible to allocate another student. The PEPS trainee should be able to complete some sections of the academic components of the course whilst waiting for another student.**  **If it is not possible to allocate another student, then the PEPS trainee may need to defer their course.**  **If the student placement is terminated later, the PEPS trainee may already have sufficient evidence to complete the course, with some additional learning opportunities provided where, for example, observations or assessments are still required. course**  **With many student placements at risk of being paused recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is necessary to be creative and flexible about retaining PEPS trainees and student placements where possible. This may be achieved through collaboration with the placement, the PEPS provider and the Mentor/Assessor to plan alternative placement learning opportunities for the student.** |
| **What support may be available for the PEPS trainee if their student is failing their placement?** | **PEPS trainees should receive close support from their Mentor/Assessor and the relevant HEI in these circumstances and be encouraged to provide close monitoring and recording of their support and assessment of a failing student. The meetings, supervision, actions planning and assessments documenting the student’s performance will all contribute to evidence the practice educator role being carried out.**  **It may be necessary to link the PEPS trainee with another student or NQSW doing their ASYE if there are remaining aspects of the PEPS domains to demonstrate.** |
| **What information should HEI’s provide for students about the PEPS PE Trainee role before starting their placements? (ref. executive summary, page 1).** | **Preparation for placements is a key area for HEI’s to include in their readiness for practice modules. Students need to understand the key roles of the PE, Tutor and OSS and to be fully aware if their practice educator is completing their PEPS training and what the course entails.**  **Students may feel at a disadvantage if they discover that their practice educator is new to student assessment and is undertaking the PEPS training. Students need to be fully informed about the support and assessment provided to the practice educator during the placement. This will include the role of the PEPS Mentor/Assessor and their remit to observe specific supervision sessions and have access to the student’s practice learning documents.** |
| **How can students provide feedback on their experience of being supported and assessed by their PE?** | **The Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL) includes a feedback form for students to complete about their practice learning experience. However, this process is applied very differently across HEI’s and sometimes practice educators do not receive any formal feedback from the student or the placement.**  **BASW have consulted with social work colleagues and are interested in looking at QAPL to review and adapt the process to ensure that it is fit for purpose and can be implemented within the resources available.** |
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| **COURSE CURRICULUM** |

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| **To fully qualify as a PE2 the PEPS trainee needs to be observed on at least three occasions; are there some examples from PEPS programmes of different activities that can be observed for the third observation? (ref. 3.7, page 15).** | **There are several ways that the third observation can be carried out as an alternative to directly observing the PEPS trainee and their student during supervision:**   * **Observing a PEPS trainee presenting a teaching and learning topic to a group of students on placement** * **Peer reviewed supervision observation** * **Leading a group supervision session** * **Observation of an online student support session** |
| **In what ways should the PEPS value statements and PCF domains be demonstrated by PEPS trainees during the course? (ref. 2.1, 2.2, pages 4-12).** | **Although not expressly stated in the refreshed PEPS document, the values and domains need to be reflected in the written evidence provided by PEPS trainees and by Mentor/Assessors in direct observation reports and mentoring sessions. The values should be assessed in an integrated way rather than separately from the domains and referred to as part of the learner’s record of evidence.**  **The values are aligned with the PCF super domain ‘Purpose’ and incorporate professional capabilities ‘values + ethics’, ‘diversity + equalities’ and ‘rights + justice’ (**[**www.basw.co.uk/pcf**](http://www.basw.co.uk/pcf)**)** |
| **How relevant is PEPS to ASYE?** | **The PEPS document refers to ASYE, as practice educators may support newly qualified social workers during PEPS training or to maintain currency after qualifying (ref.3.10, page 16. Although PEPS is focussed primarily on pre-qualifying courses, it is recommended that the values and domains are relevant for ASYE and some other post-qualifying social work courses.** |

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| **DESIGN/LEVEL OF PEPS PROGRAMMES** |

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| **Do all stage 2 PEPS courses have to include academic accreditation and be assessed at postgraduate level 7?**  **(ref. 3.5, page 14).** | **The refreshed PEPS document recommends that programmes should be designed at M level 7, as this equates to most post-qualifying social work courses. Some courses have academic credits attached but this is not essential.** |
| **Do PEPS courses run ‘in-house’ need to be registered with an HEI and have academic input to reach the standard now required for PEPS 2?**  **(ref. 3.5, page 14).** | **It is recognised that there are currently several differences in the design of in-house PEPS courses. Some in-house courses only offer PEPS 1 whilst others partner with an HEI to provide accredited courses at postgraduate level for PEPS 1+2.**  **PEPS refresh recommends that the curriculum contains academic input including social work research and theories, reflective supervision models, professional development and knowledge of critical engagement with people who have lived experience of social work.** |
| **If PEPS courses combine stage 1+2 and run the course over a shorter time frame, how can PEPS trainees ensure that they are still able to teach, supervise and assess at least two learners? (ref. 3.6, page 14).**  **The PEPS document refers to a minimum of 70 hours blended learning to be completed before a PEPS PE can be fully qualified to stage 2. What should the 70 hours comprise of? (ref. 3.6, page 14).**  **Does the requirement for 70 hours of learning by the end of stage 2 mean that two separate programmes of study should be developed, or is this viewed as a holistic training programme with developmental learning across both stages? (ref.3.6, page 14).** | **There are an increasing number of courses now providing a combined stage 1+2 programme. If the course runs over less than two academic years, it can be difficult to ensure that PEPS trainees have two students to assess before qualifying.**  **The refreshed PEPS recognise this and has stated that ‘the trainee must have taught, supervised and assessed at least two different social work learners, at least one of which must be at pre-qualification level’ (ref. 3.2, page 13).**  **The refreshed PEPS document refers to blended learning as including a wide range of flexible approaches such as distance learning, reading and research, workbook exercises, taught sessions and evidence-based portfolios (ref. 3.5, page 14).**  **The refreshed PEPS has been designed to ensure that trainees at both PEPS 1 and PEPS 2 meet all domain statements in section A, B, C and D. This approach is holistic and incremental and should enable the trainee to demonstrate increased capability and reflection as they develop their skills and knowledge for each domain (ref. 2.2 v, page 5).** |
| **How can PEPS courses be quality assured to ensure parity of learning and support for PEPS Trainees across the UK? (ref. 3.16, page 17).** | **The refreshed PEPS document aims to provide a set of guiding values and standards for practice education. PEPS has been adopted on a national basis by Social Work England, local authorities and teaching partnerships.**  **BASW is designing a bespoke section of their website to practice education which will provide information, guidance and support for practice educators (including independent educators) and employers.**  **BASW is collaborating with social work professionals to review the quality assurance of the practice learning process (QAPL).**  **The refreshed PEPS will be fully implemented in Autumn 2020. Following this BASW have proposed the establishment of a national monitoring body for key partners to monitor the quality of practice education.** |
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| **CPD** |

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| **What ongoing support, mentoring and training is available for PE’s after completing PEPS? (ref. 3.11, page 16).** | **HEI’s and Employers provide support and information to practice educators, although this will vary across the UK. For example, some HEI’s deliver specialist events on practice issues where CPD certification is awarded for attendance.**  **BASW are commissioning several webinar training sessions for social workers/practice educators which are available on their CPD website.**  **BASW recognise that practice educators have a vital and complex role in teaching, supporting and assessing social work learners and are working with other social work forums to improve the infrastructure of support available and raise the profile of practice education.** |
| **What ongoing support, mentoring and training is available for PE Mentor/Assessors?** | **Many HEI’s offer information, guidance and group mentoring sessions for PEPS Mentor/Assessors.**  **BASW are providing a series of webinar training courses and the new website for practice education.**  **In addition to this, BASW have a support forum for independent practice educators and are running online peer group discussion meetings (**[**independents@basw.co.uk**](mailto:independents@basw.co.uk)**) This is a good source of support for IPE’s who are PEPS Mentor/Assessors.** |
| **What support is in place for Employers to ensure that they meet their responsibilities for PE trainees and provide ongoing support and opportunities for CPD after qualification? (ref. 3.11, 3.12, page 16).** | **The Local Government Association has recently refreshed the standards for employers of social workers in England (**[**https://www.local.gov.uk/standards-employers-social-work-england-0**](https://www.local.gov.uk/standards-employers-social-work-england-0)**)**  **The standards include the employer’s responsibility to provide safe working conditions, regular supervision and CPD opportunities.**  **Teaching partnerships can provide a good source of support and guidance for employers. West Midlands teaching partnership commissioned some recent research to evaluate practice education in their region (see references).** |
| **What safeguards and support are in place to ensure that independent off-site PE’s are capable, meet currency requirements to assess and teach students on placement and have updated their CPD? (ref. 3.16, page 17).** | **HEI’s and other in-house PEPS providers should ensure that independent PE’s provide evidence of their qualifications, social work registration and DBS checks. An initial selection process should take place and a CV be seen to verify that the PE has currency of experience of assessing students and current knowledge of social work theory and practice. Ongoing information, mentoring and support should be provided.** |
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| **REFERENCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION** |

**BASW Independent Practice Educators Support Space.** [**independents@basw,co.uk**](mailto:independents@basw,co.uk)

**BASW Practice Education Professional Standards (PEPS).** [**www.basw.co.uk/resources/practice-educator-professional-standards-social-work-0**](http://www.basw.co.uk/resources/practice-educator-professional-standards-social-work-0)**.**

**BASW Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).** [**www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf**](http://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf)**.**

**Gair, C. Ford, R., Shannon, M. and Boath, E. (March 2020) ‘*Sounding Board’s and ‘Temperature Checks’. An Evaluation of Practice Education Across the West Midlands Teaching Partnership.* West Midlands Teaching Partnership.**

**Local Government Association, (2020) *The standards for employers of social workers in England.*** [**https://www.local.gov.uk/standards-employers-social-work-england-0**](https://www.local.gov.uk/standards-employers-social-work-england-0)**.**