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# Promoting excellence, governance and innovation in prescribing education

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The Scottish Prescribing Programmes Leads Network (SPPLN) was first developed several years ago to support the strategic direction of Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs) relating to health professionals undertaking prescribing education programmes. The network promotes a process that is high-quality and consistent across learning, teaching and assessment curriculum in post-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health (NMAHP) prescribing programmes. This preserves Scottish HEI teams' governance and ensures that the national approach and provision is of a One Scotland voice. This is pertinent in the evolving and challenging context of higher education, as staff obtain programme leader roles and require support to develop and progress programmes in line with requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB); these prescribing programmes have smaller intakes than preregistration student numbers but they have high stakes in terms of patient safety responsibilities.

The group has representation on the national NHS prescribing strategic leads group and, when advice is sought, provides consultancy to local and national HEI and NHS groups. The SPPLN continues to develop in areas of national research and collaboration to support growth and funding for projects relating to prescribing and medicine management. This is an area that is beginning to gain momentum and become re-invigorated following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Best practice is informed by developing and embedding evidence to support safe effective prescribing practice across Scotland and across the UK (Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), 2019; Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 2023). Within the education network, quality and consistency in prescribing programmes is integrated with specialised prescribing knowledge. The network provides a melting pot of clinical experience, educational expertise and wider links to other groups (such as advanced practice education or district nursing with specialist practice), which allows all programme leaders to make informed decisions reflecting current guidance and information from the 'coal face'.

The membership of the group consists of prescribing HEI programme leaders and team members in Scotland with close relationships in Northern Ireland. A chair and co-chair self-nominate for position and thereafter are elected from the existing membership with rotation every 3 years (and 1 year longer if required) supporting development within the group and exposure to invitation to national groups including the NHS, Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) and National Education Scotland.

The chair and co-chair administer for the group providing agenda and minutes, booking venues or organising Microsoft Teams meetings, and support subgroups when developing specific projects or outcomes including national audit or information templates. This supports the members in dissemination of high-quality prepared materials that can then be developed further aligning to individual HEI specific curriculum requirements.

Meetings are scheduled according to the wants and needs of the group and are presently hybrid with a desire to return to a working model once again in a venue rather than continuing wholly online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Professional representation at internal and external partners groups provides a national HEI perspective to prescribing education, policy, and research – promoting strategic direction for maintaining quality and consistency across all aspects of prescribing and medicines management education in Scotland.

The model of the network has been instrumental in providing leadership and confidence for HEI prescribing programme development across the areas of Scotland. There is a genuine desire to support the network and align to the required PSRB guidance – ie, the NMC (2023), the HCPC (2019) and the RPS (2021) – in delivering programmes, with remote discussions or queries on a variety of topics including embedding changes or supervisory questions. Practice partners can be assured that, no matter which HEI delivered it, there is a strong understanding of the educational preparation the prescriber will have had in their programme.

Within the expert group there are opportunities to embed evidence-informed practice to preregistration prescribing programmes adopting the standards. This supports consistency across standards in pre-registration pharmacology and medicines management proficiency in accordance with relevant professional standards and regulations (NMC, 2023). The requirements for assessment and supervision as part of application and programme completion are also areas that the network continues with.

Different programmes do deliver programmes aligning to the specific approval descriptors; ideas ahead of delivery and outcomes following are shared as a learning community of practice. Examples include online and blended delivery teaching, learning and assessment and number and design of high-quality governance documentation including good health, good character and practice requirements.

## Developing new items within our prescribing programmes

As a network, creativity and innovative practices are discussed in an open and transparent manner that is then developed and shared, which allows opportunities to explore new and evolving topics to keep our current programmes fresh. Non-NHS applicants now seeking to access prescribing programmes have required additional documentation to support governance implications, to align to PSRB requirements (Health Improvement Scotland, 2023). Other areas include green prescribing, social prescribing and embedding of electronic prescribing (NHS Scotland North, 2023).

## Royal Pharmaceutical Society competency framework

Core to delivering equity across prescribing programmes in Scotland has been the adoption of the RPS (2021) competency framework for all prescribers. This framework has been endorsed and adopted for use by both the NMC (2023) and HCPC (2019) within their standards for prescribing programmes and education.

These competencies have been developed to establish interdisciplinary standards for safe prescribing practice and, as such, are embedded within prescribing programmes as a requirement for all students to demonstrate to obtain prescribing rights. The network has worked collaboratively to develop a core national practice assessment document and continue to work collectively in enhancing and updating relevant developments and changes. The evolution of the RPS (2019) framework for the designated prescribing practitioner to support learning and assessment in practice has also been considered within the network, and how to embed supervision and assessment standards alongside NMC standards.

Collaboration with national stakeholders is also an important consideration for the network, and to enhance this, we have representation within the NHS National Non-Medical Prescribing Lead network. This avenue of communication is an invaluable source of shared knowledge between HEIs and NHS colleagues, enhanced by attendance from additional national bodies such as NHS Education Scotland.

It is important for HEIs, employers and prospective prescribing professionals that students are supported to undertake prescribing at the right time for them and their employer. A variety of criteria must be considered at an early stage including professional and regulatory body requirements, academic and clinical experience, and the requirement to meet a service need within the clinical role. It is in the interests of all that students are carefully guided and supported during this process and a consistent, national approach adopted by the network has contributed to success within this area.

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