

# PREPARING TO TRAIN A STUDENT

## A GUIDE FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS IN INPATIENT CARE SETTINGS

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There are some key steps that a Practice Educator can take to help prepare for training a student. Always contact the College on [dietetics@tcd.ie](mailto:dietetics@tcd.ie) if you have any questions about any aspect of your role.

### 1. Identify your learning style

If you know your learning style and that of the student, it can help you to understand how to best structure learning activities. We often teach others using methods that suit our own learning style, but a student may have a different learning style that warrants a slightly different approach to your teaching. You can identify your learning style using the [Honey and Mumford Learning Style Questionnaire](#).

The student also completes this questionnaire before placement and will know their learning style.

### 2. A few days before a student starts with you

#### 2a. Give the student a short reading list

Create a short reading list that will help the student to hit the ground running in the first 3 days with you. Direct them towards relevant materials that take no more than 2h to review, such as:

- College notes (see Placement Handbook)
- Diet sheets
- Departmental policies and resources

#### 2b. Identify a suitable patient for the first morning

Choose a patient that is a weekly review or one that you review 2-4 days before the student starts. The patient can be due a review on the student's first day or one that can be used as practice to establish the student's baseline, i.e. the case can be used for teaching purposes only (useful in early weeks).

### 3. First day with a student

#### 3a. Take 5 minutes to set yourselves up for the week

As you head to the wards or set up a clinic on the first morning with a student, chat for 5 minutes to:

- Summarise the student's progress at the end of the previous week (what's going well, needs work, etc.)
- Clarify learning goals, i.e. what exposures you can and can't give the student
- Outline what the student will be doing on Day 1 with you, e.g. seeing patients in morning or afternoon
- Confirm when documentation (cases, reflections, and assessment forms) should be submitted
- Confirm the student's white time (2-3h at some point during the week)



### 3b. Let the student show you their baseline

Don't assume a student's skill level, even with the latest assessment form. Using the patient you selected in 2b., let the student show you their baseline on their first morning by following the flowchart below.

Appropriately summarise the patient's case



Give the student a reasonable period of time to complete up to Step 4 of NCPM by themselves



Give feedback on the assessment completed



If you have no more than **2 key points** of feedback on the steps completed:

Allow the student to move to the next 1-2 steps on the same patient, as appropriate

Give feedback on the additional step(s)

Stop when 3 key points of feedback are provided, e.g. 2 points on NCPM Steps 1-4 and 1 point on NCPM Step 6

Provide a different patient on which the student can implement the feedback, up to the step at which the 3rd point was made



If you reach **3 key points** of feedback on some or all of the steps completed:

Stop giving feedback at the step at which the 3rd key point is made, e.g. Step 2

Provide a different patient on which the student can implement the feedback, up to the step at which the 3rd point was made

- If you give the student a second patient on which to implement feedback, finish the first review while the student is on their second attempt, or, if the review was for learning purposes only, leave it and move on
- If you feel that the same errors exist in the second attempt despite your feedback, ask the student to summarise their understanding of your feedback, to avoid repeating yourself. Clarify as needed in response to their answer, and provide another patient on which the student can practice again



## 4. Rest of the week with a student

### 4a. Set useful time boundaries

To manage your time and that of the student:

- Give a student a task and a reasonable amount of time to make progress with the task
- Identify a 'filler activity' that the student can complete if they finish 5-15 minutes early, e.g. revise ONS

If the student completes the task ahead of time:

- They complete the filler activity instead of contacting you
- This helps ensure that your tasks are not interrupted by being beeped ahead of time
- When you arrive at the agreed time, ask when they finished the task to gauge how much time is needed for similar tasks in future

If the student has not completed the task by the agreed time:

- Meet with them at the agreed time anyway
- Provide feedback on the work completed so far and troubleshoot any areas causing delay or difficulty
- Set a new time boundary for the next segment of work

The above strategy helps to ensure that you and the student are time blocking effectively across the day.

### 4b. Reduce time spent on documentation

#### Patient cases

- Plan to spend 10 minutes reviewing the case at the end of the day
- Integrate the case into the end-of-day feedback you provide to the student

#### Reflection logs

- Ask the student to verbally summarise their reflection log
- Have a short 5-minute reflective conversation on the topic while walking from one place to another
- Document any further learning and sign-off the hard or electronic copy
- Always aim to discuss reflection logs on the spot

#### Assessment forms

- Print a blank 'rough' assessment form at the start of the week that a form is due
- Time block a couple of 15-min segments over the week to jot down relevant examples of performance
- Set aside 60 min at the end of the week to complete the draft form, with the help of your rough form
- Plan to spend 20-30 min discussing the form with the student
- Review the guide *How to complete assessment forms in 4 steps* under the Assessment tab on [dietitian.ie](http://dietitian.ie)

