



Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements



Introduction

In response to the introduction of a new programme of undergraduate pharmacy education in Ireland in 2015, APPEL developed the “Guidance on Delivering APPEL Experiential Learning Placements” to support Trainers and Training Establishments in providing experiential learning placements to pharmacy students. These Standards are an update to the original guidance and reflect the experience gained and changes made in implementing the experiential placements since then.

What are the Standards for APPEL¹ Experiential Learning Placements?

These are the minimum standards that the Schools of Pharmacy expect to be in place by Trainers and Training Establishments when providing APPEL-accredited experiential learning placements. These standards align with the legislation and criteria established by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland regarding the provision of pharmacy education.^{2,3}

The Standards are intended to underpin all APPEL placements to promote the educational experience of students.

What is covered in the standards?

The Standards cover a range of relevant areas concerning the experiential learning of the student while on placement, such as an optimal learning environment, the role of the Trainer, activities to support student development and guidance on structuring the learning experience with a training plan.

1 APPEL - Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning was established to centralise the management and quality assurance of the experiential learning placements. APPEL is a consortium of the three Schools of Pharmacy in Ireland (UCC, RCSI and TCD).

2 Accreditation Standards for the Five Year Master's Degree Programmes in Pharmacy by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and SI No. 377/2014

3 SI No. 377/2014 – Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Education and Training)(Integrated Course) Rules 2014.

Who are the Standards for?

The Standards are intended for use by Trainers and Training Establishments and will inform students on the minimum standards they can expect during their experiential learning placement. While on placement, students will have various people involved in their training; therefore, all colleagues, mentors and managers involved in student training should be aware of and familiar with the Standards. These Standards provide assurance that experiential learning placements are consistently delivered across all practice areas and that placements are of adequate scope and structure to support the student in achieving the behaviours of the PSI Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists.

“Experiential learning placements” are an essential part of the integrated pharmacy programme and provide students with the opportunity to contextualise their learning and also to develop the skills, knowledge and values that determine competence as a professional.

Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, and is more specifically defined as “learning through reflection on doing”.

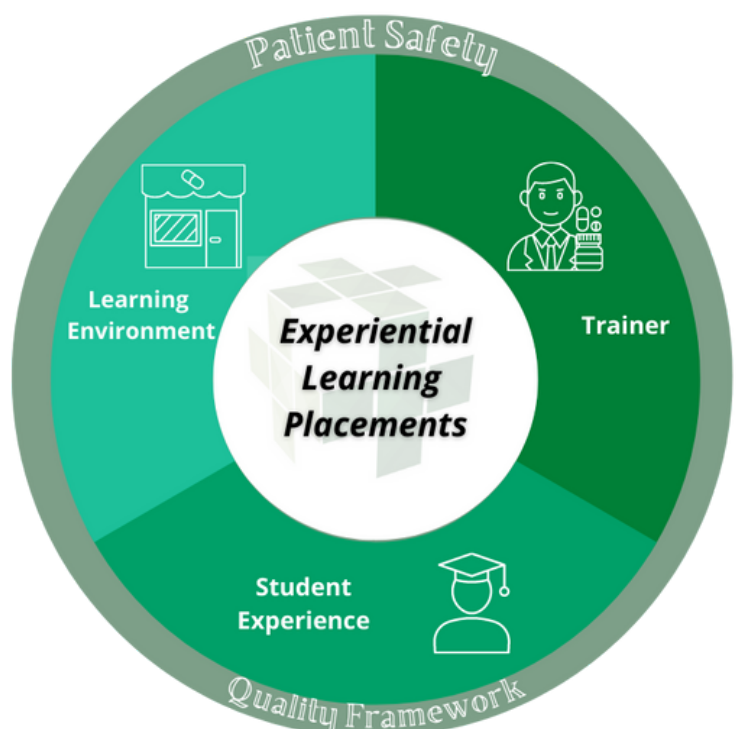
By integrating experiential learning and practical experience throughout the pharmacy programme, students can contextualise their theoretical studies from the lecture theatre and practical classes and are exposed to the skills pharmacists require to meet the demands of the ever-changing face of pharmacy in healthcare.

How are the Standards structured?

The Standards cover three domains which help promote the educational experience of the student while on placement:

1. The Learning Environment
2. The Student Experience
3. The Trainer

These are underpinned by a focus on patient safety and the APPEL quality framework: Each Standard is equally important and provides indicators against which a Trainer and the Training Establishment can assess compliance with the Standards.



The diagram below sets out the Standards under the three domains:

Learning Environment	<p>Standard 1 – A suitable learning environment is in place which facilitates experiential learning and enables the student to meet the learning outcomes of the specified placement.</p> <p>Standard 2 - The Training Establishments must adhere to the placement timetable as set out by APPEL.</p>
Student Experience	<p>Standard 3 - The student will be provided with an appropriate induction at the start of their placement and a training plan must be in place to support the development of the student.</p> <p>Standard 4 - The student will complete tasks and activities throughout the placement that support the development of competency and are appropriate for the specific placement. The tasks and activities must be related to behaviours described in the PSI Core Competency Framework.</p>
Trainer	<p>Standard 5 - The Training Establishment must ensure that the supervision of the student is appropriate to the placement type and learning environment whilst ensuring patient safety is a prime focus.</p> <p>Standard 6 - Trainers must complete the necessary training and education programmes to become an APPEL-accredited Trainer and only act as a Trainer if they are fit and competent to do so.</p>

How will the Standards be implemented?

The Standards are one element of the APPEL Quality Framework and are to be implemented in conjunction with the APPEL accreditation agreements for Trainers and Training Establishments. When considering supporting a student on an experiential learning placement, Trainers and Training Establishments should reflect on the Standards and accreditation documentation before engaging in the process to ensure that they can meet the placement requirements.

The requirement to adhere to the Standards and the APPEL accreditation agreements should supersede any employment contracts between students and Training Establishments. Trainers must complete the required training and read the relevant APPEL Placement Handbook alongside these standards.

Learning Environment

Standard 1 – A suitable learning environment is in place which facilitates experiential learning and enables the student to meet the learning outcomes of the specified placement.

Many factors can influence how a student learns, including the environment in which they are learning, relationships within the team, quality of instruction, the feedback they receive and the resources available to them. It is important to look at the environment in which the student will be learning and consider if it is suitable.

Indicators that your Training Establishment is meeting this standard are likely to include:

- The Training Establishment/Trainer has considered the level of pharmacy education the student has received to date and the learning outcomes of the placement and has determined that the range of activities the student can be exposed to will be sufficient to allow the student to develop and meet the learning outcomes of the placement (learning outcomes are detailed in the placement handbook).
- The Training Establishment/Trainer has considered the pace of the workflow in the environment (quiet or busy at certain times) and determined it will allow a student to experience and complete activities in a timely manner that will support their development, e.g. if a Training Establishment is too busy or too quiet can a student be supported?
- The Training Establishment has sufficient resources to provide an experiential learning placement. The student will have access to appropriate learning resources and facilities that are fit for purpose and adhere to any PSI requirements.
- The Training Establishment has sufficient suitably trained staff to adequately supervise and support the student training and display a mentoring culture.
- The student is on placement to learn; therefore, the effective running of the Training Establishment should not be dependent on students' attendance, and students must not be used as a substitute for any staff in the Training Establishment during placement hours.



Learning Environment

Standard 2. The Training Establishments must adhere to the placement structure as set out by APPEL.

Experiential learning placements are one component of the integrated MPharm programme, and the placement structure is organised to be similar to that of a university timetable. Students will also complete other academic work during the placement, and the placement structure has been organised to allow students sufficient time to complete their academic work outside their placement hours.

Indicators that your Training Establishment is meeting this standard are likely to include:

- Students will only be completing the placement during the hours specified by APPEL in the placement handbook.
- Employment contracts will not conflict with the placement structure or be contrary to the Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements.



Student Experience

Standard 3 - The student will be provided with an appropriate induction at the start of their placement, and a training plan must be in place to support the development of the student.

For a student to have a good learning experience, they have to understand their role and how they fit in with the team, and for the Trainer and student to understand each other's expectations of the placement. A good induction is central to this; it is an opportunity for the Training Establishment to welcome the student, help them settle in and ensure they have the knowledge and support they need to perform their role. An effective induction also generates a sense of motivation and establishes good communication links between Trainers, the team and the student from the beginning.

Experiential learning placements will be different for each student, but all placements must have structure and a plan to ensure all areas are covered in busy working environments; a training plan provides this structure.

Indicators that your Training Establishment is meeting this standard are likely to include:

An induction is completed:

- An appropriate induction is provided at the beginning of the placement, including health and safety requirements and relevant policies and procedures.
- As part of the induction, it is good practice to discuss the placement expectations with the student and what they would like to achieve from the placement.

A training plan is in place:

- The training plan should provide structure for the learning experience and expose the student to sufficient learning opportunities to achieve the specified learning outcomes of the placement.
- The Trainer should support the student in developing their training plan and review this regularly with the student throughout the placement.
- The Trainer must read the relevant APPEL placement handbook before the placement and understand the learning outcomes of the placement to enable them to provide sufficient opportunities to allow the student to achieve the learning outcomes and support the development of the training plan.



Student Experience

Standard 4. The student will complete tasks and activities throughout the placement that support the development of competency and are appropriate for the specific placement. The tasks and activities must be related to behaviours described in the PSI Core Competency Framework.

The purpose of the experiential learning placements is to provide students with the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge, behaviours and values of a pharmacist and prepare them to practice as an independent professionals in the future. As the time spent on placement is limited, maximising learning opportunities on placement is important. Allowing the student to only be exposed to and participate in tasks relevant to pharmacy practice will be key to their development. Trainers are in an ideal place to use their professional judgement and experience to help plan and guide placements so that students are exposed to a sufficient range of suitable activities to prepare them for independent practice in the future.

Indicators that your Training Establishment is meeting this standard are likely to include:

- Before assigning any activity to a student, the Trainer has considered the suitability of that task for that student dependent on the duration of the placement, the student's stage in their pharmacy programme, the previous pharmacy experience of the student, and the student's level of competence.
- Students should be exposed to a broad range of activities to meet the learning outcomes of the placement. Some activities may be appropriate to be occasionally completed; however, continuously engaging in this activity or exclusively spending time on this activity, to the detriment of the opportunity to experience other relevant activities and learning opportunities, would not enhance the student's learning experience.
- The activities that the student completes should support the development of competency in line with the PSI Core Competency Framework.
- The activity should relate to the learning outcomes of the placement as set out in the relevant placement handbook.
- Employment contracts will not require students to engage in activities unrelated to behaviours described in the PSI Core Competency Framework during placement hours.



Trainer

Standard 5. The Training Establishment must ensure that the supervision of the student is appropriate to the placement type and learning environment whilst ensuring patient safety is a prime focus.

Experiential learning is “learning by doing”, and professional skills cannot be learnt by observation alone. Students should have an “active role” to encourage them to develop their skills and demonstrate their learned skills, but this “active role” needs to occur in an appropriately supervised, safe and supportive manner. Supervision of the student is essential to ensure patient safety and support for the student. Trainers should also consider the duration of the placement, the student’s stage in the pharmacy programme, their level of competency and their previous experience when considering which tasks are appropriate.

Indicators that your Training Establishment is meeting this standard are likely to include:

- Prior to the placement starting and throughout the placement, consideration has been given to who will supervise the student and the level of supervision required. The student must be supervised appropriately at all times.
- The student has been provided with and trained on all relevant practice procedures for the placement, and they are facilitated to allow them to follow and understand safe and effective pharmacy practice procedures.
- The student is only allocated activities within their limits of competence.
- The Trainer is present at the premises for the amount of time specified in the relevant APPEL handbook. In the event of the long-term absence of the Trainer, APPEL should be informed so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- Given that practice settings are varied, the Trainer and the student have established expectations of what can be done under indirect supervision.
- Patient safety always guides the amount of supervision that a student requires. There is an understanding that students will generally require more supervision in earlier years in their studies and at the beginning of each placement. As they progress through the placement and the programme, the Trainer may adjust the level of supervision using their professional judgement.



Trainer

Standard 6. Trainers must complete the necessary training and education programmes to become an APPEL-accredited Trainer and only act as a Trainer if they are fit and competent to do so.

The Trainer role is crucial to the success of the experiential placement. Their professional judgement and experience in acting as a role-model, coach, teacher and facilitator for the student supports the development of the student and our future pharmacists. Training in the role ensures trainers are best prepared for their role and satisfies the legislative and accreditation requirements.

Indicators that your Training Establishment is meeting this standard are likely to include:

- Trainers will have completed all of the required APPEL training and accreditation documentation in advance of the placement.
- Trainers should reflect on their performance as a Trainer and address any development needs self-identified or identified through feedback.
- Trainers will act as a role model of positive and professional pharmacy practice and maintain a professional relationship with their student.
- Trainers must ensure that any potential breaches of the Student Code of Conduct, potential patient safety issues, or critical incidents involving or impacting the student are promptly reported to APPEL.
- Trainers must ensure they inform APPEL promptly of any student that is failing to progress as expected whilst on placement and to engage with the APPEL Student Success Programme where appropriate.



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