APPEL

An Chleamhnacht um Fhoghlaim ó Thaithí Chleachtadh na Cógaisíochta | Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning

2026-27 Preceptor Handbook

4th-Year Placement

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This guide contains the practical information relating to the 4th-year placement – if you wish to refresh your knowledge on some of the key topics in relating to training your student covered in the Trainer Training, you can access the Trainer Training here.

Quick Guide to 4th-Year Placement

PLACEMENT SCHEDULE

Students must complete 30 hours of placement between Monday and Friday (8 am-6 pm) (excluding bank holidays). In addition, students must be available for four consecutive hours between Monday and Friday (8 am-6 pm) each week for academic activities.

ATTENDANCE

This is a statutory placement defined in law as being 'at least four months' in duration. 100% attendance is required by all students. Any concerns regarding student's attendance or punctuality must be reported to the APPEL Operations team or Practice Educator as soon as possible.

PRECEPTOR GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

The accreditation requirements for a 4th-year preceptor requires that the Preceptor to be a PSI-registered pharmacist, is employed a minimum of three days per week and is up to date with their training requirements. They should be able to accommodate regular contact with the student (at least one meeting every four weeks) and can comply with requisite supervision requirements. They should not be absent for more than four weeks during the placement.

STANDARDS FOR APPEL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PLACEMENTS

These are the minimum standards expected to be in place by Trainers and Training Establishments during experiential learning placements. A copy of the standards is available here.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Students must comply with the Schools of Pharmacy Code of Conduct while on placement. The Code of Conduct is available here. Breaches of the Code of Conduct must be reported to the APPEL Operations team or a Practice Educator as soon as possible.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

All critical incidents (including but not limited to; fire, burglary, hold-up, death or serious injury to staff or the student – e.g., needle stick injury) must be reported to the APPEL Operations team or a Practice Educator as soon as possible.

PATIENT SAFETY

Patient safety is the student's primary concern on placement and students must be supervised accordingly to ensure patient safety. If you become aware of a potential patient safety incident concerning your student, please alert the APPEL Operations team or a Practice Educator immediately.

COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

Competency Assessment must be completed on the APPEL Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) by both the student and their Preceptor. The key dates for completion are:

- Formative assessment: completed by week 5, week ending 4th October 2026
- Summative assessment: completed by week 12, week ending 22nd November 2026

TRAVEL

Occasionally the opportunity may arise for a student to undertake travel away from their Training Establishment as part of their placement, for example, travel to a conference, an excursion to another placement site, or a placement related trip abroad. If this arises, please contact APPEL as soon as possible, as APPEL's governance and insurance responsibilities require that all travel away from the Training Establishment is risk assessed by APPEL.

Section 1 – Practical Placement Information

It has been set out in legislation that a four-month experiential learning placement will be undertaken in 4th year. This occurs in semester one of the academic year.

When?

31st August - 18th December 2026

What is the placement timetable?

Students are required to complete 30 hours of placement each week. The hours of attendance must be of "university character", i.e., **between 8am and 6pm on weekdays only**.

In addition, students must be provided with at least **one half-day each week** of no less than four consecutive hours (between 8am and 6pm on weekdays), to allow for uninterrupted time to complete academic work. Students will attend placement for 30 hours each week according to a timetable agreed with the Training Establishment.

Breaks: Students must be provided with appropriate breaks in accordance with legislation. This time is not counted as part of their 30 hours placement per week.

Bank holidays: APPEL placement is not scheduled on bank holidays, in line with the "university character" of placement. Students are required to complete 22.5 hours during the week of a bank holiday.

Future of PharmacIE: APPEL's Future of PharmacIE event takes place on Friday 23rd October 2026. 4th year students are strongly encouraged to attend Future of PharmacIE, and attendance at the event will count as a day of placement. If a student is unable to attend the event, they are expected to attend their placement on that day instead.

What will students be doing during the placement?

At the end of the 4th-year placement, it is intended that students will be able to demonstrate a required level of competency in the relevant competencies in the PSI's Core Competency Framework aligned to the three domains listed below:

1. Personal
2. Professional
3. Organisation and Management Skills

The PSI Core Competency Framework competencies can be viewed here. Students should be exposed to a sufficient range of activities to enable them to develop these required competencies within Domains 1, 2 and 3.
A training plan will enable you and your student to plan a sufficient range of activities. You can see a sample training plan here.
During the placement, you as the Preceptor will assess the level of supervision/intervention you need to provide to your student when practicing the relevant competencies as part of the Competency Assessment. Further details on the Competency Assessment process can be found on page 13.

In addition, students will complete online modules aligned to these three domains as part of their academic requirements. The modules are designed to support students' understanding of the theory underpinning the relevant competencies. Academic staff are responsible for delivering and assessing these modules. Your student may ask your opinion on a topic they are completing as part of the online modules.

Where can I get support if I am unsure how to organise a training plan or activities for my student?

For some Training Establishments and Preceptors, this may be the first time you have had a pharmacy student. A Practice Educator will be able to support you to develop ideas for activities and can discuss the training plan with you. Contact details for the Practice Educators can be found at the end of this handbook.

What are the Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements?

You will have learned about the Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements as part of your APPEL Trainer Training. APPEL experiential learning placements are designed to be workplace-based learning experiences, which are overseen by the Schools of Pharmacy "with the underpinning philosophy being that, while on placements, programme participants remain as students". The standards were developed to promote the educational experience of students on placement and to support Training Establishments and Trainers in the delivery of such placements. Any staff member involved in supporting your student during the placement should be familiar with the Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements. If you have any questions about the standards, please contact the APPEL Operations Team or a Practice Educator.

What happens if my student misses some placement time?

- This is a statutory placement, which is defined in law as being "at least four months" in duration. Thus, **100% attendance** is expected on placement.
- The APPEL timetable is flexible and can thus accommodate attendance at discretionary appointments or events by the student during the placement week.
- Students must complete 30 hours placement each week. However, where required, a student can decrease the number of hours on placement in one week and increase the number of hours in the following week(s) to complete the required amount of time, for example, 60 hours over two weeks. The expectation is that students will regularly complete 30 hours of placement time each week, and any deviation from this is an exception rather than a regular occurrence.
- If you are concerned that the student is not meeting the requisite amount of placement time, have any concerns regarding your student's attendance and punctuality, or if the student is missing placement according to a pattern that may give cause for concern, e.g., every Monday, please inform the Practice Educator as soon as possible.
- At the end of placement, you will be required to sign a 'Declaration of Satisfactory Attendance and Student Behaviour' to confirm that the student has completed the requisite placement time (30 hours per week over four months, or equivalent).

What do I do if an opportunity for the student to travel presents while on placement?

On occasion, a student undertaking an APPEL Experiential Learning Placement will be offered the opportunity to undertake travel away from their Training Establishment as part of their placement. This may include, for example, travel to a conference, an excursion to another placement site, or a placement related trip abroad. In line with APPEL's governance and insurance responsibilities relating to student placements it is necessary that all travel away from the Training Establishment is risk assessed by APPEL. Please contact the APPEL Office at ops@appel.ie as soon as possible to start the approval process.

What do I do if a critical incident occurs during the placement?

A critical incident is any actual or alleged event or situation that creates a significant risk of substantial or serious harm to the physical or mental health, safety or well-being of a student. Examples include, but are not limited to, death or serious illness of a member of staff or patient, needle-stick injury to the student, student injury, fire, hold-up or burglary.

To support students' safety and welfare, the Preceptor/Training Establishment must contact a Practice Educator or the APPEL Operations Team if a critical incident arises during the placement. Each of the Schools of Pharmacy has additional support services, which can be offered to students if required. All details discussed with APPEL will be handled in a sensitive and confidential manner.

What do I do if I am concerned about the student's conduct?

Students are required to adhere to the APPEL Joint Schools Code of Conduct.

As a Preceptor, you play a pivotal role in supporting your student's professional development. Your student will have gained academic knowledge from the first three years of their undergraduate degree, and this placement is an opportunity for them to apply this knowledge in a practical setting.

As part of the 4th-year placement, students will be developing their professionalism. If a student is displaying behaviours that are not in accordance with the APPEL Joint Schools Code of Conduct, please get in touch with a Practice Educator. At this early stage of a student's professional career, it is important that such behaviours are highlighted to students, and they are given support to help them develop. Discussing a matter with a Practice Educator does not necessarily mean it will impact a student's progression, but it will allow an opportunity for students to receive appropriate feedback and support.

At the end of the placement, you will be asked to complete a declaration that declares that "*you are unaware of any reason, on the grounds of health or character, as to why your student might be unfit to be registered as a pharmacist in the future*". If your student's behaviour throughout the placement causes you any concerns about completing this declaration, please contact a Practice Educator as soon as possible.

If you become aware of any potential breaches of the APPEL Joint Schools Code of Conduct or any potential patient safety incidents during the placement, please contact a Practice Educator.

The commitments of the Preceptor can be found in the Trainer Accreditation form; a sample form can be found on the APPEL VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Some of the specific responsibilities for a Preceptor for a 4th-year placement are listed below.

What are my obligations under the National Open Disclosure Framework?

Health care providers including Pharmacists in patient-facing, clinical settings have specific obligations under the National Open Disclosure Framework. All patient-facing pharmacists must ensure they are aware of the new legislation, the framework, and the overall expectations should a patient safety incident or adverse event arise. You will have learned about Open Disclosure when you undertook the APPEL Trainer Training, but can learn more by consulting the references signposted in this training, or by visiting the PSI website.

Responsibilities of the 4th-year placement Preceptor

1. Be knowledgeable regarding the competencies in the CCF against which your student will be assessed
2. Be available to your student for guidance and direction. While an on-site Supervisor can be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a student, as Preceptor, you are responsible for the overall learning experience of your student.
3. Have regular meetings with your student and share your insights as an experienced pharmacist. As a minimum requirement, you should have one meeting every four weeks, of which two sessions during the placement must be face-to-face. Students will benefit greatly from their interactions with you as a professional role model.
4. Complete your student's first and final Competency Assessments.
5. Contact a Practice Educator as soon as possible if there are concerns:
    a. Regarding a student meeting the requisite amount of placement time
    b. Regarding a student's attendance and punctuality
6. Contact a Practice Educator or the APPEL Operations Team immediately:
    a. if there is a potential breach of the Schools of Pharmacy Code of Conduct, a potential patient safety concern, or a critical incident.
    b. you are no longer available to act as a Preceptor or will be absent for more than four weeks throughout the placement.
7. Complete the "Declaration of Satisfactory Attendance and Student Behaviour" at the end of the placement.

Placement Support

One of APPEL's primary goals is to support Preceptors to undertake their roles. This support is provided in several ways. If you have any questions about the placement or your student before, during, or after the placement, please do not hesitate to contact us. All contact details can be found at www.appel.ie and at the end of this handbook.

Section 2 – Placement Planning

For you and your student to get the most out of the experience, it is important to be prepared. Practice Educators will prepare students before they go on their placement, including guidance in the following areas:

- Developing through experiential learning
- Taking responsibility for their own learning
- Attendance and punctuality
- Code of Conduct
- Dress code
- GDPR and confidentiality
- Mobile phone use
- Learning activities

Students have signed a student placement agreement, read a student handbook, and attended a student Pre-Placement Preparation Day.

The PSI requires APPEL, on behalf of the Schools of Pharmacy, to accredit all Training Establishments and Trainers. APPEL Ops will have been in contact with you regarding the accreditation requirements. Below is a reminder of some of the preceptor accreditation requirements and a preceptor pre-placement checklist.

Preceptor Pre-Placement Check List

1. Preceptor Accreditation

☐ Trainer Accreditation Form (For Pharmacists)

☐ APPEL Trainer Training

☐ Confirm can fulfil Preceptor requirements

→ The Preceptor is a PSI-registered pharmacist
→ The Preceptor is employed a minimum of three days per week

☐ Can accommodate regular contact with the student (at least one meeting every four weeks)

☐ Can comply with requisite supervision requirement - maximum absence of Preceptor during placement is four weeks

2. Plan Your Student's Induction

☐ Plan the time and date to complete the induction and consider other staff who may be able to support you. Some helpful hints can also be found below in Section 3 and a sample induction and training plan is available here.

3. Brief Your Team

APPEL experiential learning placements may be a new experience for many Training Establishments and their staff. Therefore it is important that all staff members are aware of the structure of these learning placements and the role of the student.

Some topics you may consider including in your team briefing are:

☐ The student's name and when they will start

☐ What the student will know

☐ What the student can and cannot do

☐ Hours/scheduled activities

☐ Support/consider buddy system

☐ Supervising the student

For staff involved in the day-to-day supervision of the student, it will be necessary for them to be familiar with the Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements.

4. Plan Your Student's Supervision

All students on placement must be supervised at all times. Supervision must be appropriate to the placement type and the learning environment while ensuring patient safety is a prime focus.

☐ Before the placement, consider how your student will be supervised; it may be appropriate to have other team members support you with this. **A student on their experiential learning placement cannot act as, or act as the replacement for, a qualified pharmacist.**

☐ Is there an On-Site Supervisor who can be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a student?

☐ As a Preceptor, ensure that those involved in the day-to-day supervision of your student are aware of their supervisory and support role and they are willing to and capable of mentoring a student.

Section 3 – During the Placement

Week One – Induction

Completing the induction and training plan is essential to ensure a good learning experience. The APPEL Induction and Training Plan for 4th-year placements is available in the resources section of the APPEL website.

Hints and Tips: Induction and Training Plan

- ✓ Sit down and discuss your plans for the placement with your student.
- ✓ Discuss your student's previous relevant experience and ask your student about their expectations and objectives for the placement.
- ✓ Clearly set out your expectations and objectives for the placement.
- ✓ Document agreed expectations, objectives, and a schedule for meetings in the training plan. You could ask your student to do this!
- ✓ Discuss and plan for key dates, e.g., Competency Assessments.
- ✓ Discuss how you like to teach and support and invite your student to describe how they like to learn, e.g., should the student ask questions as they arise, or does it work better to keep them until the end of the day?
- ✓ Ensure your student is introduced to key staff and their roles. Explain how other staff can support your student.
- ✓ Show your student the Training Establishment's layout and facilities and explain a typical daily routine in that environment.
- ✓ Provide your student with and arrange for training in any key policies and procedures, e.g., security, dress code, confidentiality, and procedures specific to your Training Establishment.
- ✓ Ensure your student knows who to contact if they have a difficulty – e.g., not feeling well, personal emergency, running late.
- ✓ Ensure both you and your student understand how to report student absence to APPEL and how to access APPEL supports.
- ✓ Agree suitable tasks for your student. Consider appropriate tasks that your student may be able to complete at busy periods.
- ✓ Ensure both you and your student have access to your student's Practice Educators' names, contact phone numbers and email addresses, and to the contact details for the APPEL Operations Team.

Placement Activities

At the end of the 4th-year placement, it is intended that students will be able to demonstrate a required level of competency in the relevant competencies in the PSI's Core Competency Framework (CCF) domains 1 (Personal), 2 (Professional), and 3 (Organisation & Management Skills).

A list of the PSI Core Competency Framework competencies can be found here. In your practice environment, you will be able to provide your student with many activities that will help develop their competency in these areas.

Experiential learning is "the process of learning through experience" and "learning through reflection on doing". It would be useful to consider the day-to-day activities that you complete as a pharmacist and consider which of these activities would be appropriate for a 4th-year student.

As the Preceptor, you will want the best learning experience for your student and will want to create the best learning environment possible. You can discuss the following tips with other staff members involved in training your student to achieve this.

Helpful Hints: Creating a Highly Productive Learning Environment

- Encourage your student to have an active role; professional skills cannot be learnt by observation alone.
- Provide your student with activities that require them to demonstrate learned skills and involve decision-making.
- Provide your student with opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills under supervision. These opportunities are best provided soon after the knowledge or skills are learnt.
- Provide activities that are of sufficient difficulty to be challenging but are not discouraging.
- Discuss the learning task once it has been completed to help your student's understanding of their experience.
- Recommend that your student use a journal; this can be used to note new experiences, things they have learned, or things they wish to follow up. It could also be used as a revision tool or to note points for discussion with you.
- Encourage your student to have an inquisitive nature and to research things rather than expecting to be told the answer.
- Encourage your student to review how they perform activities; this is essential to developing and refining skills.

Competency Assessment

Through the Competency Assessment, students are assessed against the competencies described in the CCF. The CCF contains five domains, each domain is underpinned by a number of competencies, and each competency contains indicative behaviours. These indicative behaviours describe some of the ways in which the competency may be demonstrated. During the 4th-year placement, Preceptors are asked to rate their student against the competencies for just three domains of the CCF:

Domain 1 – Personal

Domain 2 – Professional

Domain 3 – Organisation and Management Skills

You will use the rating system described in the Table 1 below, to assess the level of supervision/intervention that you need to provide to your student when they are completing tasks.

Level	Rating	Definition
N/A	Not Applicable	Not possible to evaluate the competency in the placement setting
CLO	Requires Close Supervision	Trainer has to do it themselves or walk the student through it (requires hands on guidance or constant direction)
MOD	Requires Moderate Supervision	Trainer has to prompt the student from time to time (demonstrates some independence but requires intermittent direction)
MIN	Requires Minimal Supervision	Trainer needs to be there just in case (student is more independent but unaware of all risks and still requires supervision for safe practice)

Table 1 - 4th-Year Competency Assessment Ratings Scale

As students are in the fourth year of their undergraduate programme, they are not expected to be of the same standard of competency as a newly qualified pharmacist, i.e., Ready for Independent practice. Therefore, the rating required at the end of the 4th-year placement is 'MIN' ("Requires Minimal Supervision") in all competencies of Domains 1, 2, and 3.

There will be two Competency Assessments during the placement:

- **First Assessment (Formative assessment):** **Week ending 4th October**
- **Second Assessment (Summative Assessment):** **Week ending 22nd November**

The formative assessment (also known as the assessment **for** learning) will take place at the end of week 5, and the summative assessment (also known as the assessment **of** learning) will take place at the end of week 12.

The formative assessment is undertaken to allow your student to identify competencies that they need to practise and improve upon. The ratings achieved at this point **do not** contribute towards the overall assessment outcome. It is completed by the end of week five of placement to give you and your student sufficient time to identify practice opportunities to support their improvement and development. There is no expectation that students will have reached the required standard of competency by this first assessment.

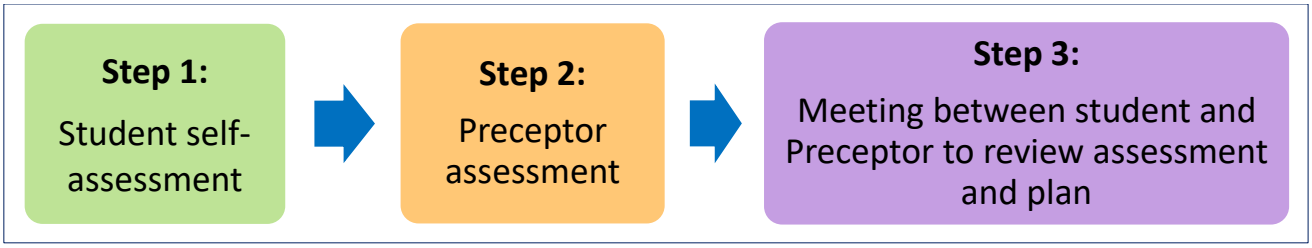
The summative assessment is the final Competency Assessment and is undertaken at the end of week 12. In this assessment, your student is required to achieve a rating of MIN (Requires Minimal Supervision) in all the competencies assessed.

If your student has not achieved a MIN (Requires Minimal Supervision) rating in all applicable competencies by the end of week 12, you should contact a Practice Educator immediately. The Practice Educator will support you and your student in developing a focused training plan for the final four weeks of the placement to give the student every opportunity to reach a MIN (Requires Minimal Supervision) rating by the end of the placement. The final Competency Assessment will remain open until the end of week 16 to allow you to amend any scores given at week 12 if required.

In the past, some Preceptors have raised queries regarding the opportunities to practice certain competencies in their setting. Some suggested activities that could develop competency in these areas can be found Table 2. These may assist you and your student in identifying an activity that is suitable for your placement environment. If you believe that any of these competencies are not applicable in your placement setting, please contact a Practice Educator as soon as possible.

The Competency Assessment will be completed and recorded on the APPEL Virtual Learning Environment. The VLE will link each student with their Preceptor and provides details of all the required competencies.

Competency Assessment Process



Step 1 The student completes a self-assessment exercise where they assign themselves a rating in each of the specified competencies, based on what they consider their competency rating to be.

Step 2 You rate the student in each of the specified competencies based on the level of supervision/intervention you need to provide to your student when practicing this competency. Before rating the student, you may wish to get feedback from other colleagues who have been involved in the student's training.

Step 3 A meeting should be organised between you and the student, where you can review your respective ratings together. The following should be discussed as part of this meeting:

a) You should provide constructive feedback that
   (i) identifies those competencies where the student has performed well
   (ii) highlights competencies where improvement is needed
   (iii) discuss what competent looks like for the competency
   (iv) discuss how this may be achieved

   The provision of feedback is particularly important for the first assessment to ensure the student is best placed to achieve the required rating in the final assessment.

b) Discuss where any differences have arisen between your ratings – seek to understand why the student felt they were at that rating and provide honest and actionable feedback. It is important to check the student's understanding of the feedback provided.

c) Identify the areas where the student is not at the required rating; explore why this may be? Have they not yet had opportunities to develop this competency, or do they require more practice in certain activities to develop the competency? Consider and discuss with the student activities that may provide opportunities to develop these competencies and plan these activities in the training plan.

d) Record the feedback given at each assessment; record actions that should be completed, and ensure the student amends the training plan as required.

Helpful Hints:

- Arrange a time to complete Step 2 of the Competency Assessment and a time for the meeting with your student to discuss the feedback and ratings from your assessment (Step 3 of the process) well in advance of the required deadlines to allow for unexpected delays.
- Check your student understands the feedback you are providing and record your feedback.
- Using the training plan template. Put a plan (with dates) in place that establishes opportunities to enable your student to be exposed to activities that will help them reach the required level of competency.
- If you believe that any of the competencies are not applicable in your placement setting, please contact a Practice Educator.
- Seek help early. If you have identified or have concerns about your student's development of competency, contact a Practice Educator.
- For support, guidance or general advice on the Competency Assessment, do not be afraid to contact a Practice Educator.

Table 2: Examples of Activities to support Competency Development

Domain 1 – Personal	
Competency	*Suggested activities that will expose student to some aspects of this competence (activities may be sector specific)*
1.1 Demonstrates leadership	Encourage student to identify areas for improvement and bring them to team attention e.g.: ➢ In Industry setting: encourage student to participating in regular GMP walk-downs and communicate findings at team meeting, e.g., raise deviations, tap-ins, near-misses, and incidents as appropriate and not rely on other team members to take responsibility. ➢ In Hospital/Community setting: encourage student to lead by example with regard patient safety and dispensing procedures – clear neat and tidy workspace, following all SOPs, etc. ➢ Encourage student to proactively complete the near-miss log for errors. Discuss errors with colleagues to identify learnings and seek support to reduce errors.
1.2 Confidently makes sound decisions and solves problems	Give student tasks that will require decision-making e.g.: ➢ In Community setting: ask students opinion and encourage them to make a decision on how they would deal with certain scenarios, e.g., medicine shortages or deal with an ethical situation that may arise, e.g., improperly written CD prescription, emergency supply of controlled drug, doctor self-prescribing. Can advise student to use PSI ethical decision-making tool to guide themselves through the issue. ➢ Encourage student to use effective communication skills to relay accurate information to other healthcare professionals. ➢ In Industry setting: could set student an ethical decision around GMP issues, e.g., Reporting and documenting inconsistencies in the lab, risk versus benefit of batch release in different scenarios, risk versus benefit of removing products with low sales from a market.
1.3 Establishes and maintains collaborative working relationships	Involve student in multi-disciplinary team meetings, give student actions to complete from meeting outputs. Involve students in tasks that require consulting appropriate team members/experts as required when making decisions, e.g., consult a technical expert for a technical issue or HR for a HR issue or pharmacist with specialist expertise in hospital.

Domain 2 – Professional	
Competency	*Suggested activities that will expose student to some aspects of this competence (activities may be sector specific)*
2.1 Applies a "person-centred" approach	In Industry Setting Have student complete tasks that will involve the impact of role on the patient, e.g., considering does the PIL contain all relevant safety updates, considering does the batch conform to the necessary standards. Add student to a project team that requires consideration of how the patient will be affected by the project, e.g., considering how will research innovation/pricing of medicine/licensing of medicine affect the patient? How will changes be communicated to patient? Are patient's views involved in the project?
2.4 Adapts to change and innovation	Give student a project which involves implementing changes, e.g., if changes in legislation occur give student project to take responsibility for all subsequent actions required, such as updating SOPs, planning staff training, etc. Give student responsibility for drafting a new/updating an SOP for a process/change in process, e.g., updating SOPs to reflect changes to process after introduction of the Common Conditions Service.

Domain 3 – Organisation and Management Skills	
Competency	*Suggested activities that will expose student to some aspects of this competence (activities may be sector specific)*
3.1 Manages Self	Allocate a project/responsibility that requires student to manage their own workload, deadlines and be completed in an efficient manner. Examples of student projects/responsibilities completed in the past are: ➢ Updating SOPs, staff training, completing an audit project ➢ Taking responsible for verifying and processing one HSE community drug scheme (community) ➢ Preparing training for new product release, review guidelines and validation protocols (industry) ➢ Updating IV monograph/quick reference guides (hospital)
3.4 Contributes to continuous quality improvement and risk management	Give student responsibility for completing an audit and reporting back findings to team, e.g., PSI pharmacy self-assessment audit, antimicrobial audits or venous thrombosis audits in hospitals, participating in GMP walk-downs and communicating findings at team meeting in industry setting. Have student complete a root cause analysis for a process investigation or review error log. Present findings to team and identify strategies to reduce risk.

Feedback

We greatly appreciate your open and honest feedback on what is working well and how we can make things better so that we can improve this experience for everyone involved. Please get in touch with APPEL at any time during the placement if you have any feedback or suggestions.

At the end of the placement, we will send you a placement evaluation – we appreciate you taking the time to complete the evaluation. We also welcome feedback from students and conduct surveys and focus groups with them after their placement. Some examples of the feedback received from previous 4th-year students can be found in Appendix I and may be helpful to consider when preparing for your student's placement.

Here are some of the initiatives we have introduced based on your feedback:

Competency Assessment Clinics

Completing the formative Competency Assessment can bring up questions for Preceptors. To assist you with any questions you may have and support you in providing learning opportunities for your students, the Practice Educators will hold Competency Assessment Clinics after the formative Competency Assessment has closed.

Future of PharmacIE

A career event for pharmacy students and professionals. The next Future of PharmacIE event will take place on Friday 23rd October 2026. APPEL's Future of PharmacIE event takes place on Friday 23rd October 2026. 4th year students are strongly encouraged to attend Future of PharmacIE, and attendance at the event will count as a day of placement. If a student is unable to attend the event, they are expected to attend their placement on that day instead. We would encourage all students to attend and make the most of this valuable careers event. For consistency, please refer to attendance as strongly encouraged. . Further information can be found at https://www.appel.ie/future-of-pharmacie .

Additional Training

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

In an increasingly diverse world, people are becoming aware of their unconscious biases and have a desire to develop their cultural competence. As a pharmacist and Trainer, we know you are committed to treating all patients, colleagues and students with dignity and respect. You can learn more about Dignity at Work in these two short courses on HSeLanD:

- Equality and Diversity
- Dignity at Work (revised 2022)

These courses have also been signposted for students. If you ever have any concerns about your students' behaviour in this respect, please contact a Practice Educator or the APPEL office immediately.

Open disclosure Training

Open disclosure is an open, consistent approach to communicating with patients and the relevant person(s) when things go wrong in healthcare. The National Open Disclosure Framework was published in 2023 and outlines the specific obligations for healthcare providers including pharmacists under the framework. Below are links to Open disclosure training which are available to all pharmacists. Further pharmacist specific resources may become available over time

- IIOP – Online Training Module – Open Disclosure- available here

- HSEland - Module 1 Communicating effectively through open disclosure, Module 2 Open Disclosure: applying principles to practice– available here
- HSE webinars – available here
- PSI Resources – Open Disclosure - available here

Frequently Asked Questions

Why can the student not attend placement in the evening or at weekends?

One of the core principles of APPEL placements is that students remain as students while on placement. Hours of attendance are designed to be of a "University Character". APPEL and University student supports are available for the student during placement hours.

What do I do if the student is unwell or absent?

If the student is unwell during their placement, please excuse them from attendance and/or help them get medical care, as appropriate. If you are concerned about a student's health, attendance, or they are not meeting the requisite amount of placement time, please contact a Practice Educator as soon as possible.

Why do I have to inform APPEL of any concerns regarding student attendance and complete the "Declaration of satisfactory attendance and student behaviour" at the end of placement?

The placement is defined in law as being 'at least four months in duration.' For the student to fulfil this legal requirement, 100% attendance is required on placement. The Schools of Pharmacy must ensure this legal requirement has been fulfilled, so they monitor all attendance. If a student is not attending placement, APPEL and the Schools of Pharmacy need to be made aware of this to address the situation and offer the student support. During placement, students remain registered with their HEI, and each HEI, therefore, has a duty of care to their student.

I'm offering a paid placement; can I ask my student to sign our standard contract?

Students can sign a contract with their Training Establishment. However, during APPEL Placement hours, the primary relationship between the student and their Preceptor is that of a student and a Trainer. Training Establishments must therefore not enter into any contracts with students which are inconsistent or conflict with this relationship or conflict with the Standards for APPEL Experiential Learning Placements. It is a condition of engagement with APPEL that the Training Establishment and Trainer agree that APPEL placement standards and agreements, supersede any contracts between students and their Training Establishments. A breach of this condition could result in the withdrawal of APPEL accreditation. Contracts must not conflict with the placement timetable nor require students to engage in activities unrelated to behaviours described in the PSI Core Competency Framework during placement hours.

Can I get a student back to complete their 5th-year placement?

The legislation (SI 377, 2014) does not permit students to complete their 4th and 5th-year placements in the same Training Establishment.

Can I stop the placement, mid-placement?

If you are not certain that your Training Establishment will be able to take a student for the entire duration of the placement, please inform APPEL before the placement starts. In cases of emergency or serious and unexpected shortage of staff to supervise the student, please contact APPEL as soon as possible.

What happens if there is a change in Preceptor during the placement?

If you are aware there is going to be a change in Preceptor, you must notify the APPEL Ops immediately, and they will discuss with you the necessary arrangements for paperwork and accreditation of the new Preceptor. You must ensure there is an adequate handover of information regarding the student's progression and competency between Preceptors.

Appendix I – Tips and Advice

From past Preceptors

"We put a lot of planning into our student induction, to ensure the student got off to a great start. A useful topic that we also included was email etiquette."

"Our student was very shy, I suggested they get to know one patient well initially. I introduced the student to one regular patient, and then encouraged the student to speak to that patient each time they came in to help build up a connection and overcome shyness."

"We really wanted our students to be able to self-start and have ownership of their activities and tasks. To help this, as part of the induction and during regular meetings, we would discuss the following:

- Encourage self-directed learning and highlight Training Establishment resources that were available e.g., students could be sent links to resources to enable them to undertake their own research and preparation.
- Encourage the student to develop the ability to act independently and with clarity of purpose, looking for support when necessary.
- Encourage the student to find out about other roles within the company.
- Encourage the student to learn teamwork, within a team and across different groups.
- Encourage the student to manage their time, understand their own capacity and time management, and understand how to manage different and changing priorities."

Hospital – "Giving students a project to complete helps develop so many skills – time management, interacting with the team, communication"

Industry – "To help my student see the relevance of the competency regarding 'person-centred' approach, I explained that quality is all about the patient in all its aspects, and so 'person-centred' is underlying every procedure and SOP in the organisation".

From past Students

What is important to students?

- Completing an induction. Students said, "It is important to discuss and have an understanding of your Preceptor's expectations and goals of the placement."
- An opportunity to discuss and review their placement goals halfway through the placement. Depending on the practice setting, students said they might not know enough about the placement to set realistic goals at the start and would therefore like the opportunity to review these once they have a better understanding of the placement setting.
- All staff members of the Training Establishment understanding the purpose of the four-month placement and the role of the student.
- Receiving feedback on how they are developing. As part of the feedback received after the formative competency assessment, students would like to get an insight from their Preceptor on how they can improve specific competencies and what the Preceptor would expect to see if a student were demonstrating each competency.
- Students also appreciate when feedback is included within the comment section of the APPEL VLE when rating the individual competencies.

What type of activities did students find provided good learning opportunities?

- Having their own project to work on.
- Being assigned a topic to review and presenting it to other team members.
- Reviewing error reports.
- Being involved in meetings on current projects.

What did students appreciate their Preceptors doing?

- Setting them up with a buddy at induction.
- Involving the student in tasks that the Preceptor is doing – even if student was just shadowing.
- Meeting regularly with the student – students said that sit-down, face-to-face chats are always best but regular contact even by email/phone is really appreciated.
- Checking in with students and offering support to students regularly, even if the student does not seem to need it. Sometimes students feel that there is an expectation that they should be able to do a task without asking for help or asking questions.
- Asking students if they have any questions, as asking questions can be uncomfortable for some students. If they are asked regularly, they may, over time, find it easier to ask themselves.

Appendix II – Examples of activities completed by students on 4th-year placement

Examples of activities completed in pharmaceutical Industry placements

Placement Example 1 – Manufacturing Site

1. Activities to develop communication skills

- Learning about the hierarchy of quality review and management structures, including attending and actively contributing to daily meetings.
- Communicating information and quality-related issues to the wider quality team.
- Learning when and how to escalate issues to other members of the team.

2. Activities to develop workplace management and quality improvement and risk management

- Updating quality documentation, e.g., completing pre- and post-production batch record review.
- Preparing manufacturing batch records for the QP.
- Understanding quality oversight structures and participating in quality projects.
- Participating in root cause analysis for processes.
- Participating in GMP audits.
- Completing end of month QA metrics.
- Participating in international quality management processes and meetings.

3. Activities to develop Commitment to lifelong learning and development

- Encouraging students to reflect on and discuss any learnings from visits to manufacturing sites and other departments and laboratories.

Placement Example 2 – Pharmaceutical Industry Global Office

1. Activities to develop workplace management and quality improvement and risk management

- Supporting the development of medical information literature.
- Reviewing non-urgent material/medicine information queries prior to team review.
- Completing internal quality audits, e.g., reviewing the completion of SOP records.

2. Activities to develop team working and self-management skills

- Facilitating meetings, learning to take meeting minutes.
- Working with other students on placement, organising the final team meeting of the placement, including preparing the agenda and facilitating the meeting.
- Setting up and preparing for one-to-one meetings with their Preceptor.

3. Activities to develop leadership skills and commitment to lifelong learning and development

- Completing a presentation to the group manager about their experience as a student in that Training Establishment.
- Participating in company careers symposium.

Examples of activities completed in Role Emerging Practice placements

Placement Example 1 – Academia

1. Developing skills and supporting ongoing projects within the Training Establishment

- Supporting projects in laboratory-based research.
- Completing desk research of laboratory processes to understand the reason for the process.
- Learning new techniques and understanding formal procedures, e.g., how to write an SOP.
- Analysing, manipulating quantitative or qualitative data.
- Reporting data, writing up reports, and sharing and discussing data with the wider team.

2. Activities to develop workplace management, communication and quality improvement

- Managing and organising their own work within time constraints and proactively seeking assistance in a timely manner.
- Communicating their research and data in a clear and concise manner.

Placement Example 2 – Professional body

1. Developing skills and supporting ongoing projects within the Training Establishment

- Completing quality checks and undertaking annual reviews.
- Learning about quality assurance processes.
- Involvement in planning for training courses.

2. Activities to develop team working and self-management skills

- Working with and meeting new people and developing personal skills.
- Giving a presentation.

Examples of activities completed in Hospital placements

1. Developing skills and supporting ongoing projects within the Training Establishment

- Participating in preparing and sending out medication safety newsletters.
- Participating in Hospital's Quality Team meetings and activities.
- Participating in regular audits, e.g., antimicrobial or drug safety audit

2. Activities to develop workplace management and communication skills

- Learning from resources available in the hospital, e.g., Completing ISBAR training and developing logical thought processes in the communication of information.
- Preparing draft responses to medicine information queries or medication queries from consultants.

3. Establishes and maintains collaborative working relationships

- Spending time with other healthcare professionals, e.g., dieticians, physiotherapists or attending multidisciplinary team meetings.

Examples of activities completed in Community placements

1. Auditing and reviewing the system for medication error management within the pharmacy

- Developing a new near-miss log template for the pharmacy to facilitate convenient and accurate recording of the "near misses".
- Auditing the existing "near miss" incidents and reporting back to the pharmacist and team.

2. Developing a SOP for a product newly available as OTC medicine

- Training staff on the new SOP.
- Auditing, reviewing and adding updates to existing SOPs.

3. Developing a new "workflow" process for management of repeat prescriptions using reports available on dispensing software

4. Supporting the pharmacist to prepare and organise governance and management for nursing home dispensing

Appendix III – Roles of the Preceptor

The roles and responsibilities of the Preceptor are covered in the APPEL Trainer Training. Some of the key roles and responsibilities are listed below to support you in your role and as a reminder from your training.

Role	How do I do this?
Facilitator "Helping to guide your student's learning." Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, but an experiential placement is a different learning environment compared to the structured learning environment of university. To help students to adapt to this learning environment, your student will look to you as a facilitator to help guide their learning.	• By identifying learning opportunities and recognising chances to broaden your student's learning experience, you can assist them in achieving their learning outcomes. You should recognise, facilitate and support opportunities for your student to practice the competencies of the PSI CCF. • Take responsibility for initiating and maintaining a suitable learning environment for your student. • Support your student in preparing a training plan to provide a framework for their learning and help ensure that they are exposed to a sufficient range of opportunities to develop their competency.
Role-Model "Leading by example."	• By instilling professional values and attitudes while mentoring and guiding your student through the complexities of your current practice, you will support your student's professional development. • Challenge your student's perceptions of the diversity of the role of the pharmacist.
Coach "Improving your students' performance by providing feedback, guidance and support."	• Provide timely, constructive and supportive development feedback in a structured manner throughout the placement. • Encourage self-directed and reflective learning.
Instructor/teacher "Helping your student acquire knowledge and skills."	• Share your expertise in your area of practice. • Teach your student about what you are doing. • Refer your student to relevant guidelines, references and resources. • Students will bring their own attitudes, motivation and experiences to the placement, which in some instances may not be entirely compatible with your values, approach to learning, and experience of teaching. In such situations, it is important for you to recognise that people learn in different ways and adapt your teaching style (in so far as possible) to one that suits the needs of your student.

Appendix IV – Abbreviations and Definitions

Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning (APPEL) – A collaboration between the three Schools of Pharmacy to manage the experiential learning placements for the integrated pharmacy programmes.

CCF – The PSI's Core Competency Framework.

Competency Assessment – The process by which Preceptors will assess a student's competency in the relevant competencies in the CCF.

HEI – Higher Education Institution.

Practice Educator (PE) – An employee of one of the Schools of Pharmacy who also works with APPEL and acts as a liaison between APPEL, the Training Establishments/Trainers, the students, and their School of Pharmacy.

Preceptor – A registered Pharmacist who is overseeing the experiential placement of 4th-year student(s).

PSI – Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland.

RCSI – Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences.

School of Pharmacy – UCC School of Pharmacy, RCSI School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences, or Trinity School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Trinity – University of Dublin, Trinity College.

Training Establishment – The specific location providing the placement.

UCC – University College Cork, National University of Ireland, Cork.

VLE – APPEL Virtual Learning Environment. APPEL's virtual classroom in which students and their Preceptors can engage in certain activities. For students, this includes the academic modules relating to their placement, and for Preceptors, this could include online Preceptor training. Both students and Preceptors will use the APPEL VLE for Competency Assessment, and the APPEL VLE also hosts the placement matching system.

4th-Year Placement – Experiential learning placement in the fourth year of the five-year integrated pharmacy programme.

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