



Placement Concerns Protocol

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School of Health & Social Care

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Introductory notes

The following protocols are provided as a guide to students, practitioners and academic colleagues in addressing concerns that may arise during the course of a placement. It is appreciated that all situations are individual and that the protocols provided may not fully address the concern. It is therefore important and necessary that the rationale for any deviation from the protocol is clearly documented.

These protocols make reference to the Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy (Bournemouth University 2011) and the Fitness to Practise Procedure (Bournemouth University 2011) where appropriate. It is recommended that professional and organisational guidance is acknowledged when documenting and reporting concerns.

The regulators of health care professions require all qualified registrants to work collaboratively in facilitating the learning experience and in promoting best practice (NMC 2008, HPC 2009, HPC 2009a). Where concerns are raised the practice assessors are required to effectively communicate with the Higher Education Institution and the student to help identify additional student support mechanisms, address concerns regarding assessment of proficiency and to provide feedback to help develop the learning environment (NMC 2008a, HPC 2008).

For students completing a programme leading to NMC registration there is also a responsibility to raise concerns whether it is in relation to learning needs or to care standards (NMC 2011). Whilst it is a daunting prospect for many, promoting best practice can only serve to further raise standards and provide effective learning environments for students to develop their professional acumen.

It is recognised that raising a concern is a challenging aspect of professional practice. However, it is hoped that by having a transparent approach to managing concerns issues are managed in a timely manner that ensure that the duty of care to the public and the profession is upheld.

Confidentiality

The discussion and actions taken in the context of these protocols remain confidential to the parties involved. Exceptions or breaches of this confidentiality must be justified, for example, safeguarding.

Copies of these protocols are available on the student academic community, myBU, for practice and the Practice Assessor website <http://practiceassessor.bournemouth.ac.uk/>. If you wish to have further information please contact your Academic Adviser if you are a student. If you are a member of the academic staff or a colleague from practice please contact UPLA@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Glossary

The terms reflect the use and application within Bournemouth University. Similar terms may be applied elsewhere with other meanings.

Head of Practice Education (HoPE)

This post is located within the School of Health and Social Care and has a leadership role in the quality assurance of all practice learning for programmes within the school.

Education Co-ordinator and Practice Placement Lead

These posts lie within NHS Trusts. They are leads for education and occupy senior positions within the NHS. Their roles vary slightly between organisations, reflecting a wider remit than solely pre-registration education.

University Practice Learning Adviser (UPLA)

The UPLA role is to support practitioners (mentors/ practice assessors) responsible for student learning and assessment in the practice area. Activities include practice assessor preparation, delivery of updates to assessors in Practice, audit of placements, overview of placement evaluations and support in the management of concerns. The UPLA will hold a professional award and will have gained a higher academic award. They are funded from within the University.

Academic Adviser

Academic advisers are responsible for the academic and pastoral support of the student during the course of the programme.

Link Midwife Teacher

This role descriptor is specific to midwifery, wherein a midwife teacher provides an important face-to-face liaison role between the University and the linked NHS Trust. These are academic staff of the University, who commit up to one day per week in placement settings. They are funded from within the University. Link midwife teachers is to support practitioners (mentors/ practice assessors) responsible for student learning and assessment in the practice area. Activities include practice assessor preparation, delivery of updates to assessors in Practice, audit of placements, overview of placement evaluations and support in the management of concerns.

In the situation of midwifery students and their practice learning, reference in the following text to **UPLA** should also be taken to include **Link Midwife Teacher**

Practice Assessor

This term identifies those practitioners who assume responsibility for the support and assessment of students in practice placements. They are themselves supported by the practice education framework and are invariably employed by placement partner organisations. All students within the Midwifery, Nursing, Operating Department Practice, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Programmes will have a named practice assessor on each substantive placement. These practitioners have been described as mentors and practice placement educators, within some professions.

Placements Team

The team of administrative staff employed by Bournemouth University to plan student placements, reflecting the validated programme plan

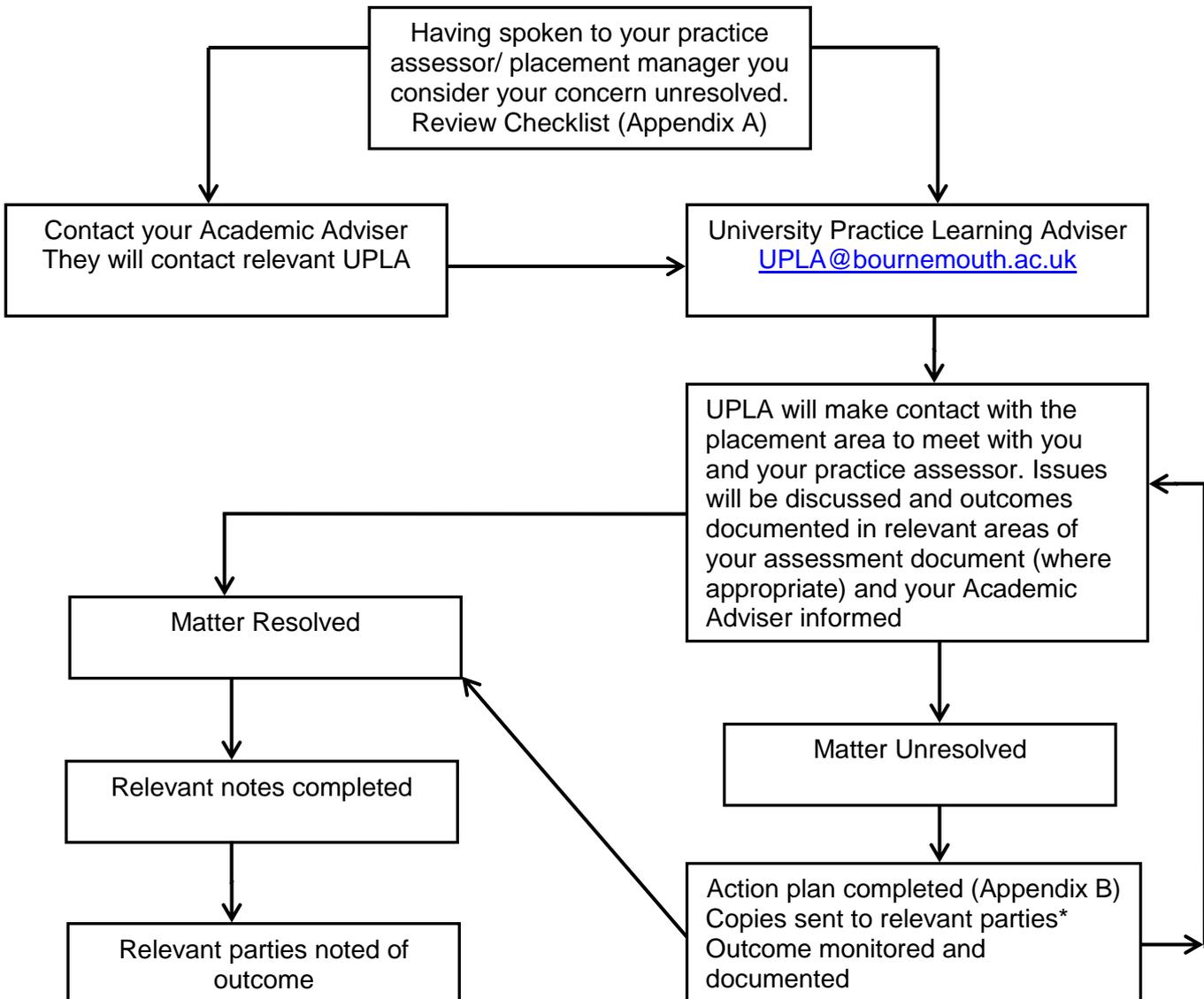
Student Concern

Practice learning and assessment

Whilst on placement there is an expectation that you discuss any concerns you may have with your practice assessor in the first instance. If they are not available then approach the manager of the placement or a senior member of staff. It is appreciated that it is difficult to let others know of concerns for fear of how this will be received. By speaking sooner often concerns can be remedied before they escalate. If you are concerned, others may also be concerned, and so you are acting in accordance with professional guidelines to promote a safe and effective learning environment.

This protocol is for you to follow if you have a concern regarding;-

- Your practice assessor (e.g. finding time to meet up)
- Learning opportunities (e.g. you feel you are not being challenged enough)
- The assessment process (e.g. your assessor is not familiar with the process).



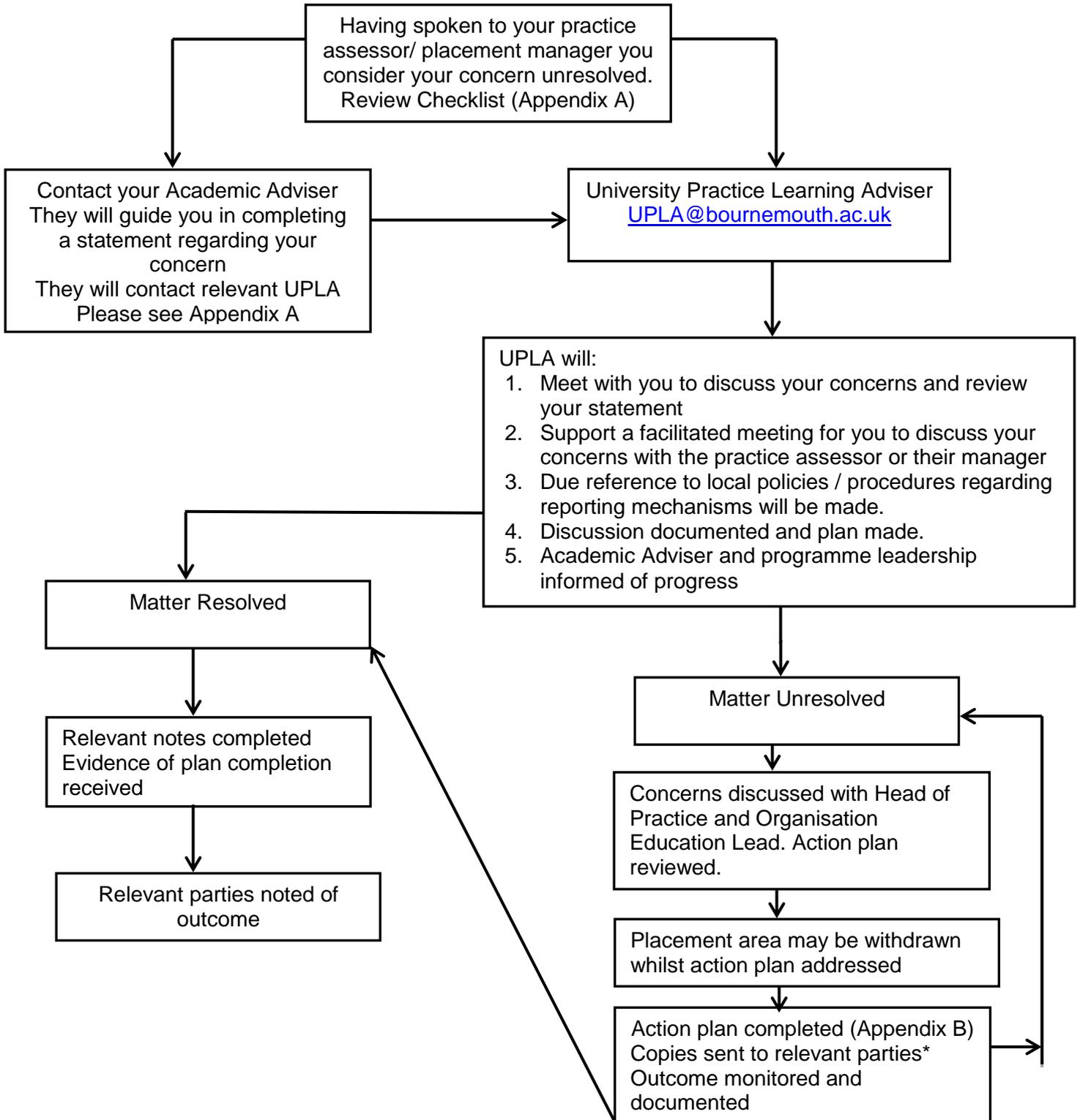
* Where desired by the organisation's education lead will be provided with details of concerns and action plans.

Student concern

Practice

This protocol is for you to follow if you have a concern regarding:-

- The role of the student in practice (e.g. supernumerary status at risk)
- Policies and procedures not being adhered to.

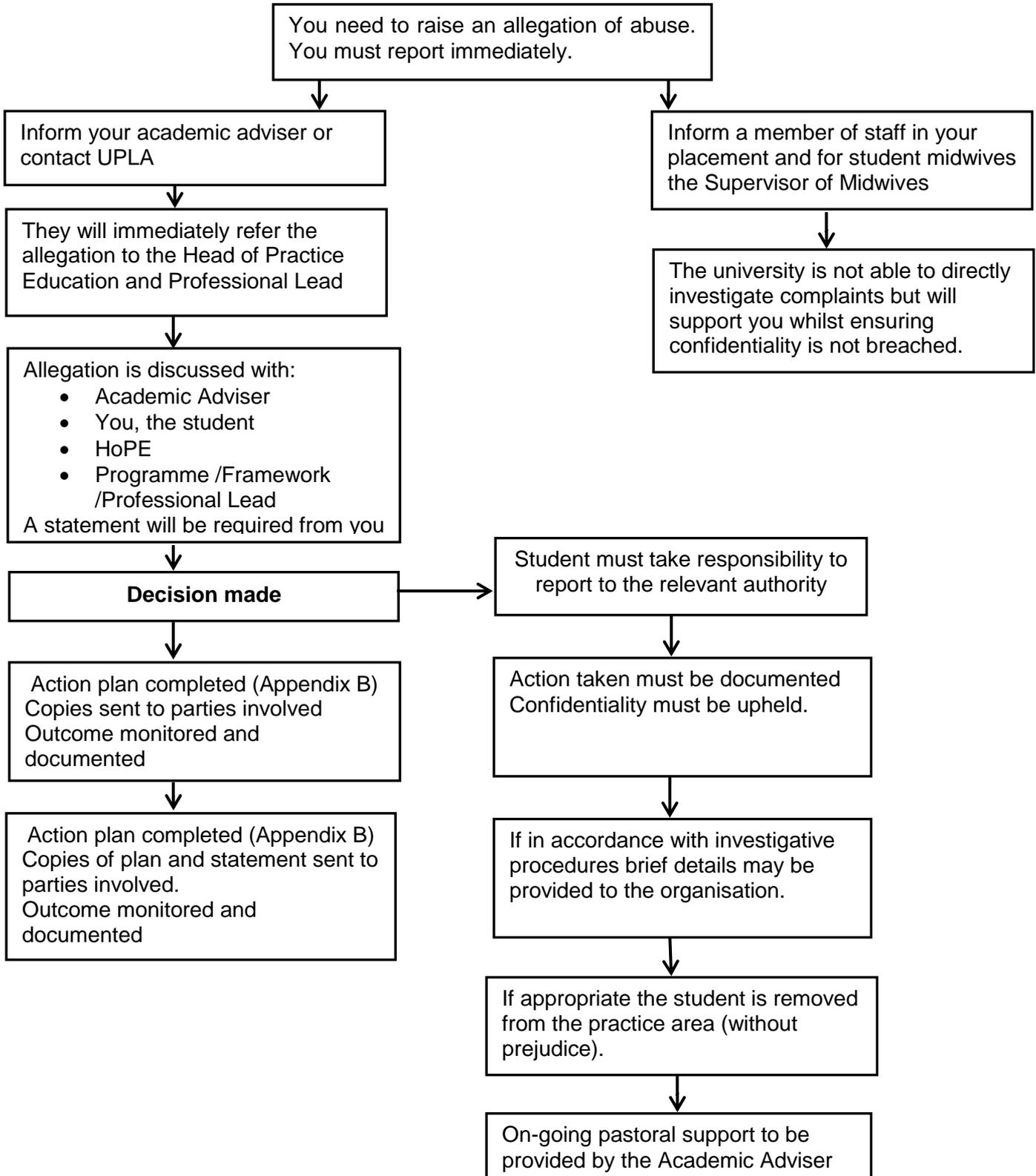


* Where desired the Education lead will be provided with details of concerns and action.

Student concern

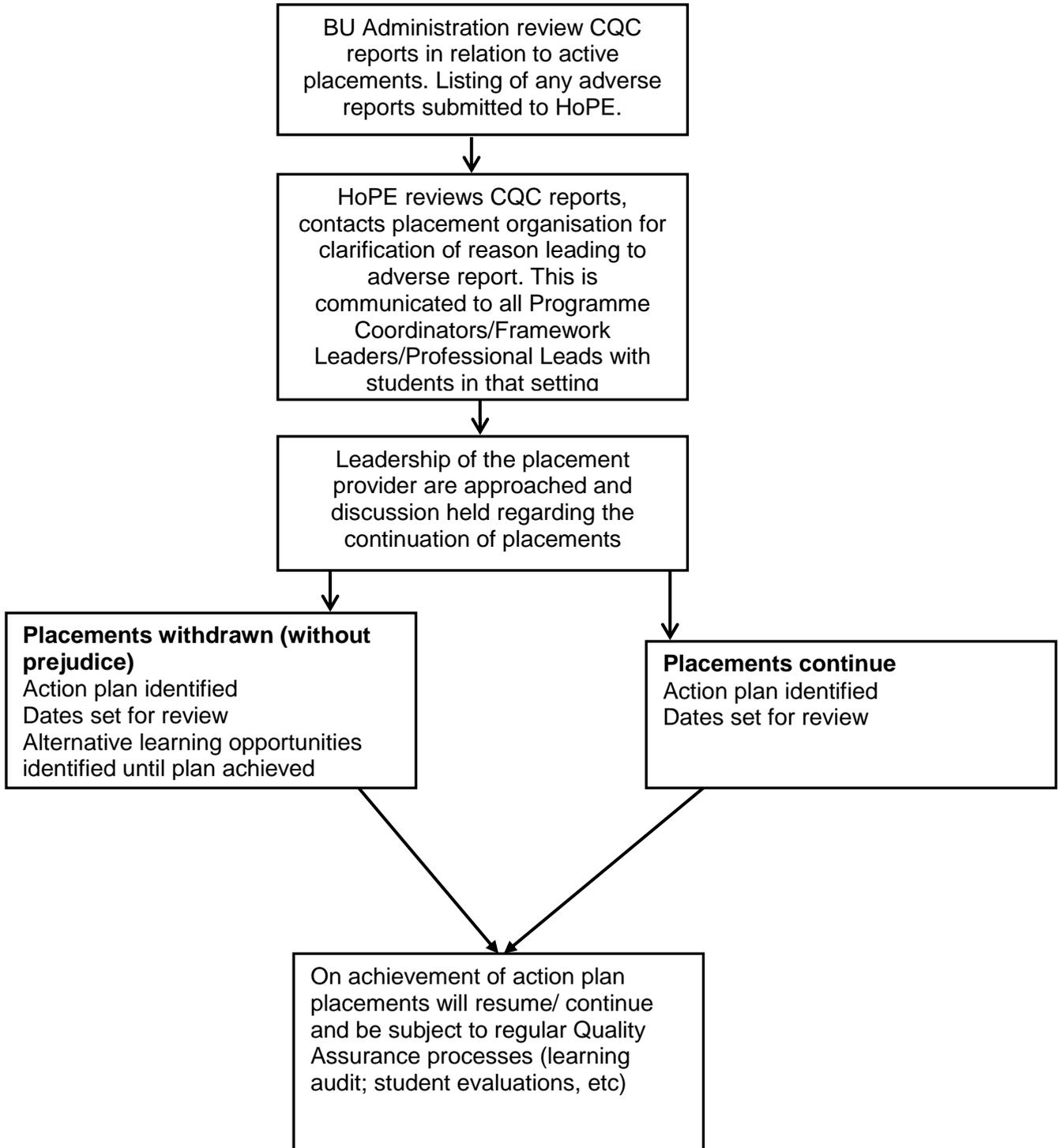
Alleged abuse to Patients/Service Users

It is important that you review the Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy (Bournemouth University 2011) in conjunction with this protocol.



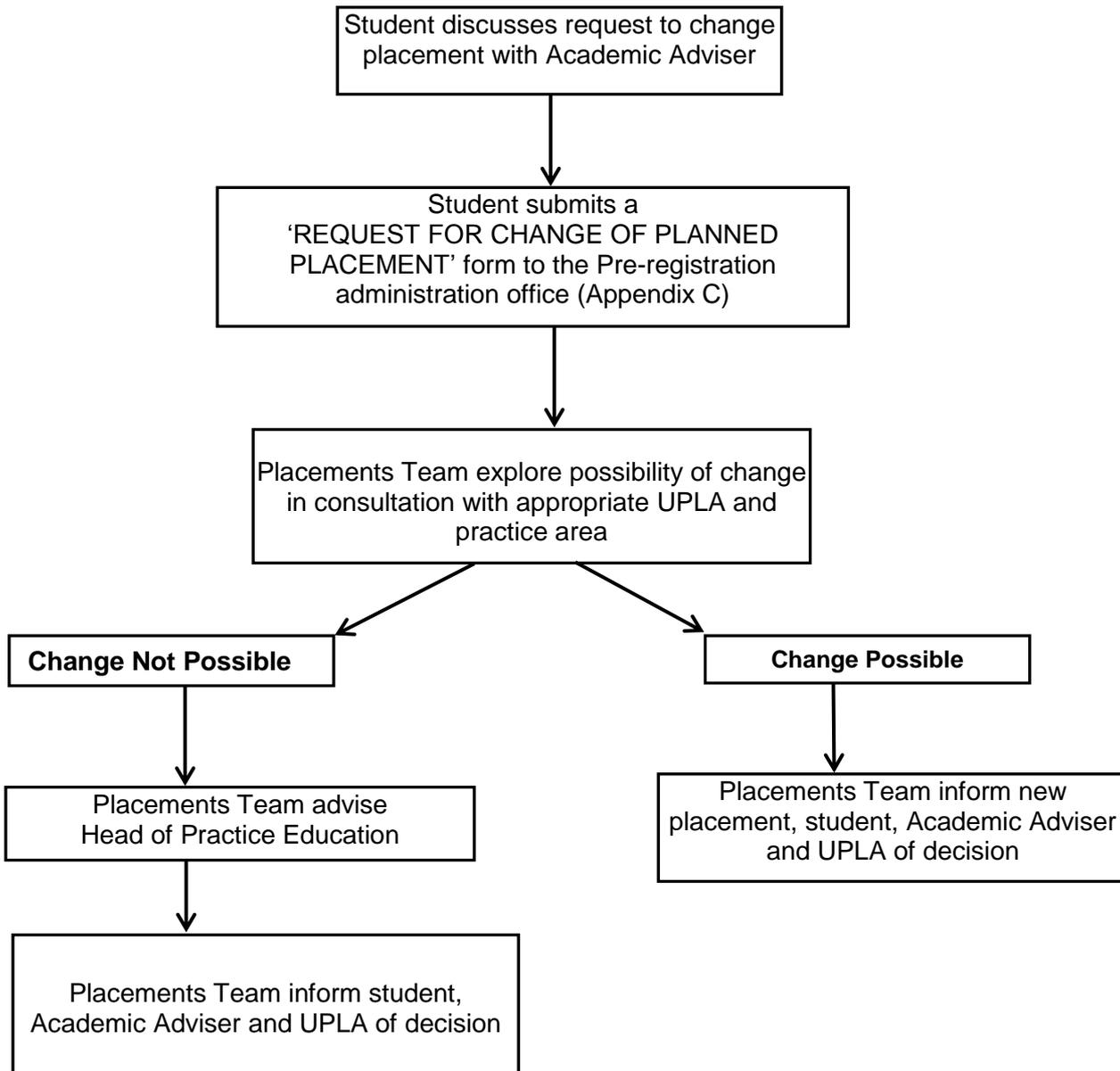
Bournemouth University Practice Concern raised by Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Prior to completion of all practice placement learning audits CQC reports will be reviewed. In addition routine review of the CQC website will be made on a weekly schedule and any adverse reports of a setting used for student placements will be notified to the HoPE. For those placements that are not under the regulation of the CQC such as schools the appropriate regulatory reports will be reviewed.



Process for a change of placement for students of the Nursing Framework

In order to request a change of placement you will need to carefully consider your grounds. A change of placement can only occur if there is a substantial reason such as significant change of circumstance.



Practice Assessor Concern

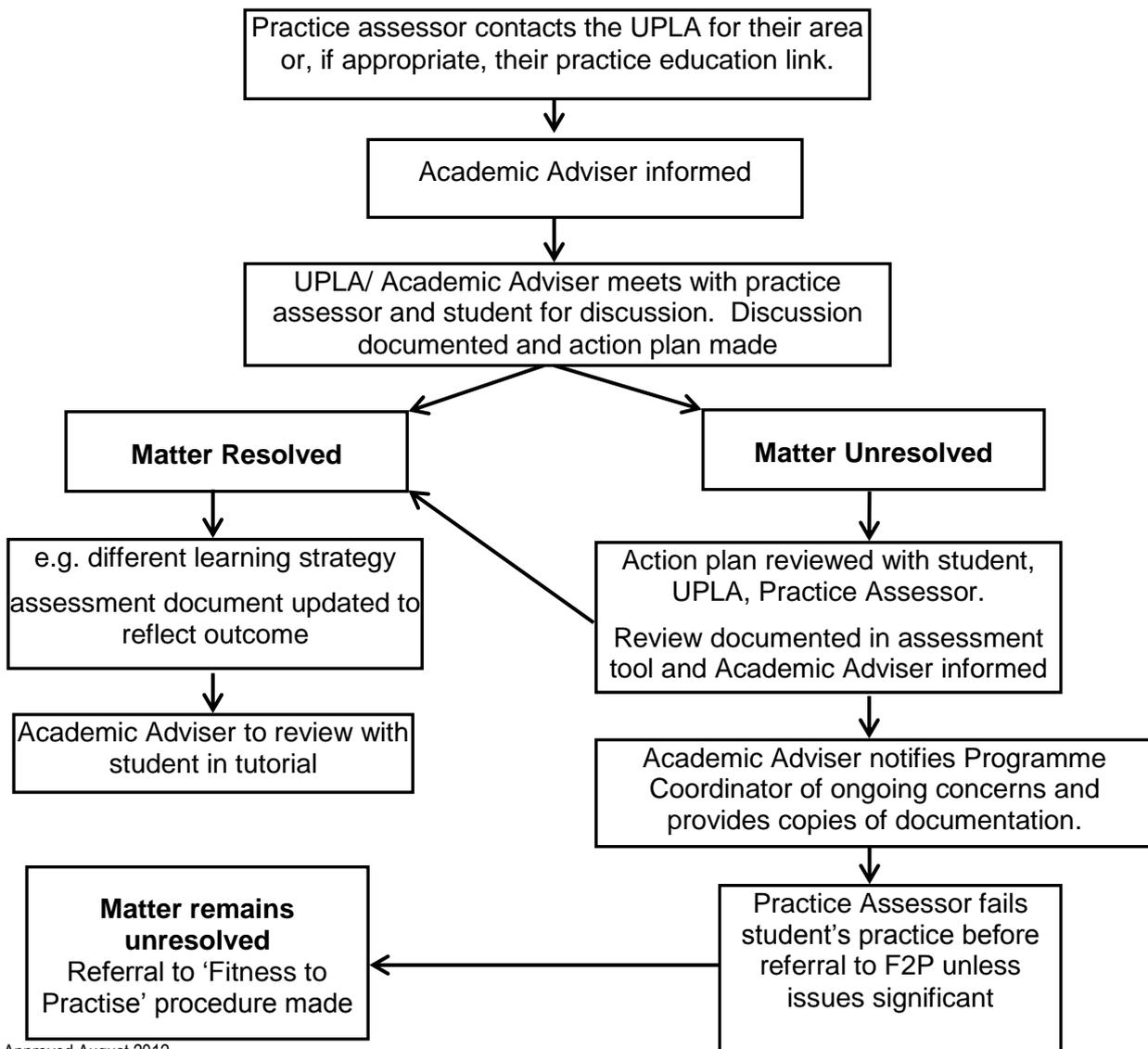
Student practice

As a qualified assessor you are considered the 'gatekeeper' to your profession (Duffy 2003). It is therefore essential that you do not give the benefit of the doubt when assessing your student's practice. It is appreciated that helping students to recognise concerns regarding their practice can be difficult. There is an expectation that you will have discussed your concerns with the unit manager so that you can be supported in their management. Practice concerns can vary and so it is important that you gain evidence so that they can be reviewed in context to facilitate appropriate action planning to aid placement progression. Evidence may include colleague feedback or observed practice examples.

Concerns can include:

- Attendance e.g. changing shifts, not fulfilling required time in placement, punctuality
- Perceived lack of motivation
- Perceived lack of progression in skills and knowledge
- Inappropriate dress

Any concerns you may have must be discussed with your student as soon as possible. Please contact the UPLA team if you need to clarify any points before discussing them with your student. This may be outside of the planned formal reviews but should still be documented in the assessment tool. The student should be made aware that you are making contact to gain further support.



Appendix A – Raising Concerns Checklist

To help you feel more confident about raising your concern the following checklist is provided to help you think about the information that may be needed to help investigate your concern. It is not a definitive list but can be used to help you clarify why you are concerned and to be able to document with clarity.

1. What is my concern? This may be specific event or a series of events that have caused a growing discomfort.
2. Who was involved? Remember to ensure confidentiality.
3. Are they able to corroborate your concern?
4. Having discussed the event with them do you remain concerned?
5. Have you reviewed relevant documents? You may need to check the care plan, policy or procedure for example.
6. Were there other factors involved? For example staffing levels, your own previous experience, resources available.
7. Did you discuss these concerns with your Mentor/ Practice Assessor/ Placement Manager? If not, why not?
8. Is there anything else you need to consider?

Please ensure that you do not discuss your concerns with outside persons unless they are recognised support services e.g. student support, professional body or union representative. Having reviewed this checklist you will need to complete a brief statement to help you in reporting your concern.

Include the following:-

1. The event(s) that gave rise to your concern. A brief description detailing the time, place and action.
2. Develop questions as to why you are concerned. For example, you observe moving and handling procedures which do not follow your understanding of the policy. Why is this case?
3. Try to ensure that you maintain an objective position.

<http://www.rcm.org.uk/college/support-at-work/workplace-advice/statement-writing/>

http://www.unison.org.uk/healthcare/nursing/pages_view.asp?did=1319

Appendix B – Action Plan

1. Clearly describe area/s of concern.

2. Outline discussion when this concern was identified

3. Produce a clear plan to address concerns, identifying who will do what and within what timescale.

Action to be taken	By Whom	By When

Date:

Signature of those present:

Evaluate plan on reverse of form documenting whether achieved, partially achieved or not achieved and reasons for non or partial achievement. If necessary produce a further action plan.

Appendix C – Change of nursing placement

REQUEST FOR CHANGE OF PLANNED PLACEMENT

Student Name _____ Academic Advisor _____

Course _____ Intake _____

Name of Placement _____ Start Date _____

Change requested (e.g. change of placement area, timing of placement, location of placement)

Reason for request to change _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

As Academic Advisor I *support* / *do not support* * this request for change (*delete as appropriate)

REMEMBER IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR ACADEMIC ADVISOR TO GUARANTEE AN OUTCOME OF A CHANGE OF PLACEMENT REQUEST

(In the absence of you academic advisor please discuss request with Programme Leader or Head of Programmes)

Reasons _____

Personal Tutor Signature _____ Date _____

PLEASE SUBMIT COMPLETED AND SIGNED FORM IN TO THE BOX OUTSIDE B420

Date Request Received by Placements Team _____

Request *enabled* / *not possible** (*delete as appropriate)

New Placement (if appropriate) _____

Comments _____

Placement Administrator signature _____ Date _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Outcome of request sent to: Student Academic Advisor Placement area(s) (if applicable)
 Placement request form filed in Student file Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix D - Policy

RAISING CONCERNS (WHISTLEBLOWING) POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

In order to uphold the high standards expected to safeguard the public it is important that procedures exist for disclosing and addressing malpractice within organisations to which students are exposed. All students who complete programmes in the School of Health and Social Care will have undertaken placements in a variety of settings, in which it is possible, that they may witness practices that they consider to constitute malpractice. All staff and students have a responsibility in highlighting or communicating issues or concerns.

This Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure aims to offer guidance to facilitate and support students, academics and practice staff to safely raise complaints/concerns that may arise in practice placements.

An important aspect of the process is assuring and maintaining confidentiality which will be guaranteed at all times. However, due to the nature of some situations there are occasions where anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

2. Policy Statement

This policy and procedure applies to all programmes within the School of Health & Social Care that require student allocation to a practice placement as part of a programme of study. It has been developed in collaboration with Placement Providers.

As a public body the University recognises its responsibilities under the Public Interest Disclosure Act ('Whistleblowing' Act 1999) and the second report on Standards in Public Life (Nolan Committee 1996) that staff and students are permitted to speak freely without fear of disciplinary action, victimisation or discrimination. In addition, the policy seeks to enable students to raise complaints about the practice and serious professional misconduct that contravenes the Code of Practice of the General Social Care Council, the Health Professions Council; or the Nursing and Midwifery Council. This policy and procedure should be applied and understood within the context of the Bournemouth University, Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedures.

The Care Quality Commission published a guide to Raising a Concern which can be accessed from

http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/20111214_whistleblowing_quick_guide_final.pdf (accessed 14 December 2011).

As Dehn (<http://www.cfoi.org.uk/pdf/corruptiongd.pdf>) (accessed 27/7/11) points out, the person concerned with serious wrongdoing in an organisation faces three options:

- To stay silent
- To blow the whistle internally or with the responsible person
- To blow the whistle outside to the authorities or the media.

This policy recognises that silence should not be an option of choice.

In particular the University acknowledges the relative powerlessness and vulnerability of students who may be undergoing a process of assessment by work-based staff during their practice placements and takes seriously their responsibilities towards their students.

This is particularly so for students who may be seconded from the host placement provider organisation. In such cases where the seconded student raises an issue or concern related to their employing organisation, any subsequent investigation **MUST** be addressed from the perspective of the individual as a student undertaking a programme at Bournemouth University School of Health & Social Care and therefore this policy and procedure **WILL** apply. Seconded

students may also wish to refer to the Widening Access Policy signed by them with their employer/sponsor.

3. Definition of Whistleblowing

“Raising a concern about malpractice within an organisation or through an independent structure associated with it”

UK Committee on Standards in Public Life

In the context of this policy and procedure, Whistleblowing is defined as ‘raising complaints or concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the workplace without fear or reprisal’.

Bournemouth University, School of Health & Social Care will ensure that they do their ‘reasonable best’ to manage staff and students against possible risk and harm. For the purpose of this policy risk is defined as any situation that the student is involved in, which gives rise for concern for any of the parties involved.

The student practice placement evaluation questionnaire provides students the opportunity to identify issues and give feedback from their placements. However, if their complaint is serious and needs to be reported urgently, then the guidance below shows how this should be undertaken.

This policy does not seek to address issues that may be dealt with under existing complaints procedures. It seeks to enable students to raise concerns, in good faith, that relate to the following categories set out as ‘qualifying disclosures’ in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1999):

- Criminal offences
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety dangers
- Damage to the environment
- Concealment of information about any of these matters.

4. Procedure

4.1 A student who has a concern whilst on (or following) a practice placement, or a member of University staff who may have/share the concern, must raise it **immediately** with their Practice Assessor/Practice Learning Adviser/Academic Adviser.

The student may wish to seek pastoral support from their Academic Adviser.

Discussion with the student at this stage, should focus upon achieving resolution for the student, improving practice and preventing repetition of malpractice.

If the issue is resolved at this stage, **no further action is required.**

4.2 If the cause for concern is not resolved, the Academic Adviser or other first recipient of the concern must advise the appropriate Framework Lead and Head of Practice Education.

The Framework Lead will ensure that appropriate pastoral support is available to the student. Where requested, and where possible, the anonymity of the person making the allegation should be protected.

The Framework Lead should provide guidance about how to write a statement, outlining the concern/issue, but should not write it for the student.

It is the Framework Lead's responsibility to ensure that the student accesses all appropriate support available within the University in respect of Additional Learning Needs, Counselling, Chaplaincy, and other student support services.

The Framework Lead should then ensure that the Head of Practice Education and the University Practice Learning Advisers are informed of the concern/issue, and make contact with the Placement Provider's Senior Manager.

The student will be supported in presenting their complaint to the placement provider organisation, consistent with the complaints procedure of that organisation.

The University will retain a continuing interest in any investigation by providing pastoral support to the student.

The final outcome of the investigation should be reported to the Student, Framework Lead and other appropriate stakeholders.

At any point in this procedure it may be necessary to disclose to or inform a professional and regulatory body. It may also be necessary to comply with safeguarding laws on the protection of vulnerable adults (POVA) and protection of children (POCA)

5. Interviewing the Student

If a representative from the placement provider wishes to interview the student, then they should contact the student to negotiate an appropriate date and time. The student's University representative will attend, if the student wishes, to provide pastoral support.

Unsatisfactory Resolution?

Where the complainant and University staff, involved, are not satisfied that resolution has been achieved, a meeting of the key personnel involved should seek to develop an action plan aimed at ensuring the protection of the student and of the public interest. This may involve communication with appropriate authorities or regulatory bodies. In these circumstances consultation with the Dean of School and the University Director of Human Resources is required. The implications for future use of the placement should be considered. Finally, the student should be encouraged to reflect upon the person and organisational learning that has arisen as part of this process.

December 2011
Rev Andy Philpott, Head of Practice Education
Deirdre Sparrowhawk, Academic Administration Manager

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