

# Concerns Protocol



## Raising & Managing Concerns in Practice Placements

(Including Student Guidance)

Faculty of Health & Social Sciences

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Version 6 October 2023: Bournemouth University UPLA Team and Head of Practice Education (HoPE)

## Introductory notes

Bournemouth University (BU) works in partnership with a wide range of providers of health and social care in its provision of practice placement experiences for students on all professional programmes. This enables students to gain experience in their field of practice whilst also meeting the requirements of the relevant professional and regulatory bodies. All BU partner organisations strive for excellence in the services they offer and the placement learning opportunities students can reasonably expect. Contemporaneous student feedback enhances the quality assurance of these services, thus providing a valuable resource in the evaluation and development of the services as well as effective placement learning provision.

It is recognised that raising a concern is challenging for all stakeholders. However, with a transparent, linear, and consistent approach to managing concerns, issues can be managed in a timely, collaborative and supportive manner to ensure that the duty of care and professional standards are upheld.

The Protocols provide a support for students, practice partners and BU personnel to collaboratively manage concerns that may arise in relation to the supervision and assessment of placement practice. Some situations are unique and the protocols provided may not fully reflect every eventuality, therefore it is important that the rationale for any deviation from the protocol is clearly documented.

These protocols make reference to the: -

- Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy (Bournemouth University 2019)  
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/policy/whistleblowing-policy-oct-2019.pdf>
- Fitness to Practise Procedure (Bournemouth University 2020/21)  
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/pandptest/11h-fitness-to-practise-procedure.pdf>
- Support to Study procedure  
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/pandptest/11j-Support-to-study-policy-and-procedure.pdf>

They should be used in conjunction with the placement providers process of raising concerns. For further information, guidance and support please contact [UPLA@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:UPLA@bournemouth.ac.uk)

## Confidentiality

Students and those supporting students must uphold confidentiality when raising a concern. While it may be necessary to share names of personnel this should only be done so after clear consideration and only as part of the identified formal process for raising a concern. Students and those supporting students will adhere to the standards of their professional body to support professional practice and appropriate disclosure.

## Monitoring and Reporting

Through the processes outlined within this document the Head of Practice Education (HoPE) and key personnel have oversight of all incidents where a concern is raised in practice. This ensures consistent actions, plus provides an ongoing review of themes and outcomes. A summary of concerns is reported to senior personnel within Bournemouth University at the Admissions, Progression and Employment Group (APE). Themes and actions are shared and reviewed at relevant meetings with practice partners, commissioners and as required, regulatory bodies.

## Recording concerns

If you are a student, there is guidance on page 11 to help you seek support, prepare a record.

If the concern is regarding student achievement and progress, there is guidance in the help area of the portfolio platform used by Bournemouth University. Visit [www.opalbu.com](http://www.opalbu.com) and click in the user guides and support area in the left hand column. There is guidance to help you record in the portfolio, create development plans and access support.

## Glossary and Abbreviations

The terms reflect use and application within Bournemouth University.

**Placement Practice Education Lead.** Within placement provider organisations, these roles may have differing titles and are the leads for education with a remit for quality assurance and management of placement provision. (e.g. Education Co-ordinator / Learning Environment Lead / Practice Placement Lead). There are also personnel in practice who will have day to day responsibility for the provision of practice education in that organisation (Practice Educators, Practice Education Facilitators or Nurse Education Supervisors). Within this document these roles are collectively referred to as Placement Practice Education Lead. These roles are the points of contact when there are concerns affecting practice education in that organisation. They can fulfil the NMC role of the nominated person.

**Practice Assessor and/or Practice Supervisor.** This term refers to clinical practitioners responsible for the support and assessment of students in practice placements. All students will have a named practice assessor on each substantive placement. These practitioners may be known as mentors, clinical mentors and practice placement educators, depending on the programme and professional body requirements. Within Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Programmes, students may be supported by Practice Supervisors as well as Practice Assessors reflecting the [Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment](#) (NMC 2018).

**Head of Practice Education (HoPE).** This post is located within the BU Faculty of Health and Social Sciences overseeing the quality assurance facets for practice education, predominantly for the healthcare programmes situated within the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at Bournemouth University.

**University Practice Learning Adviser (UPLA).**\* The University Practice Learning Adviser (UPLA) team are a university-based practice education team who support all the health and social care programmes requiring practice placement and can fulfil the NMC role of nominated person. As well as managing concerns, they are responsible for collaborative quality assurance of the learning environment. For students completing the Return to Practice Programme, the team members are the 'nominated' person for students to contact regarding concerns and queries. The team can be contacted at: [upla@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:upla@bournemouth.ac.uk).

**Bournemouth University (BU) Placement Link.**\* In addition to the UPLA team, Programmes may have link lecturer roles that support student supervision and assessment e.g. Link Midwife Teacher. They can fulfil the NMC role of nominated person. They may also be known as the Placement Tutor for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy.

*\*Within this document these roles referred to as 'the appropriate BU Placement Link'.*

**Personal Tutor (PT).** Personal Tutors are responsible for the academic and pastoral support of the student during the students' time on their programme.

**Academic Assessor (AA).** For NMC programmes the [Academic Assessor](#) is responsible for co-ordinating each placement assessment alongside identified practice-based staff (Practice Assessor). Some elements of this role may be delegated to other BU personnel initially (for example the University Practice Learning Adviser).

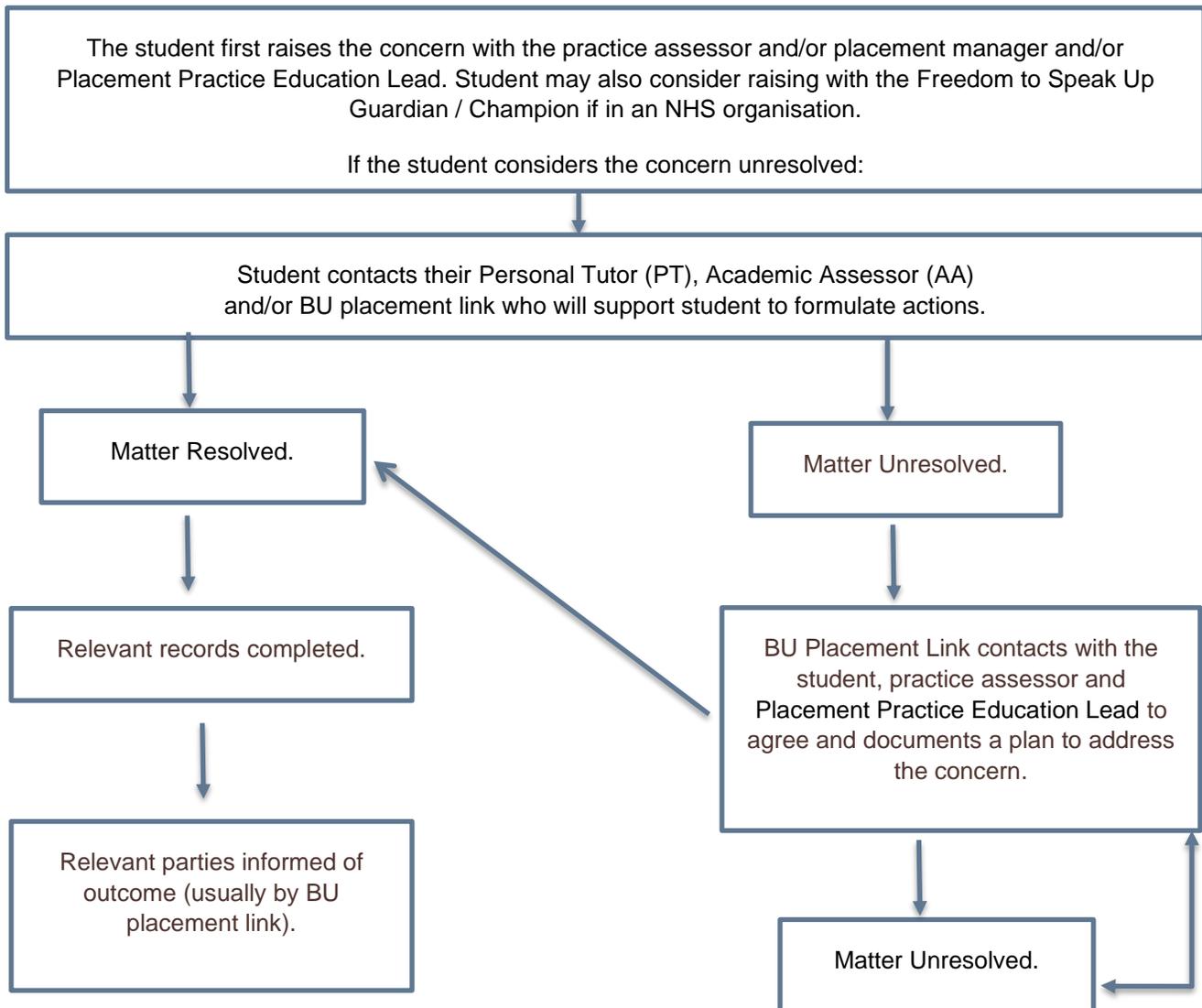
**Placement Support Team.** The team of support staff employed by Bournemouth University to co-ordinate/allocate student placements reflecting the validated programme requirements for placement learning experience.

**Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG) and Champions.** These are roles within NHS organisations supporting staff to confidently discuss and challenge unacceptable behaviours or practice. The Freedom to Speak Up network will aim to promote and continue to create a working environment, which is open and transparent and free from bullying, harassment and victimisation. You can access more information [here](#).

## 1: STUDENT HAS A CONCERN AROUND THE QUALITY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

This algorithm should be utilised when a student identifies concerns relating to the quality of the learning environment such as:

- Practice assessor/supervisor(s) not reflecting the expectations of their role in supporting a student.
- There are perceived limited learning opportunities available.
- There are perceived concerns as to the ongoing practice assessment process.
- Student supernumerary status appears to be not upheld.



Useful resource:

Recording your concerns, page 11

Clarifying supernumerary status, page 13

## 2. STUDENT HAS A CONCERN AROUND STANDARDS OF CARE & / OR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE.

This algorithm should be followed to ensure clear reporting if a student believes that standards of care and / or professional practice are compromised. For example:

- Policies and procedures not being adhered to
- Conduct of staff
- Patient care, safeguarding concerns
- Safeguarding issues

Student must report the concern *immediately* to the practice assessor, a member of the clinical team or Placement Practice Education Lead. Student may also consider raising with the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian / Champion if in an NHS organisation.

The person reported to will be responsible in managing the concern in accordance with policy and procedure and contact BU placement link.

Should a student feel unable to address concerns at placement level they must report the concern as soon as possible to their Personal Tutor (PT) / Academic Assessor(AA) or BU placement link. PT/AA will support student to report the concern supported by the BU placement link.

BU personnel inform Head of Practice Education and Programme Lead

Head of Practice Education and/or BU placement link will liaise to:

- Ensure senior practice education link aware / relevant BU placement links aware.
- Agree points of contact for the student, BU and the placement provider.
- Identify appropriate personnel to support the student to formally record a statement.
- Follow local reporting policies / procedures, adhering to confidentiality policy / non-disclosure.
- BU representative(s) will be appointed to support the student at any required meetings. Students can also seek representation from their relevant unions/professional body.
- Agree arrangements for ongoing pastoral support for the student.
- Outline arrangements for updating the student as to actions.
- Enact joint quality assurance review of the learning environment.

Placement provider reviews concern in line with their policies and procedures.

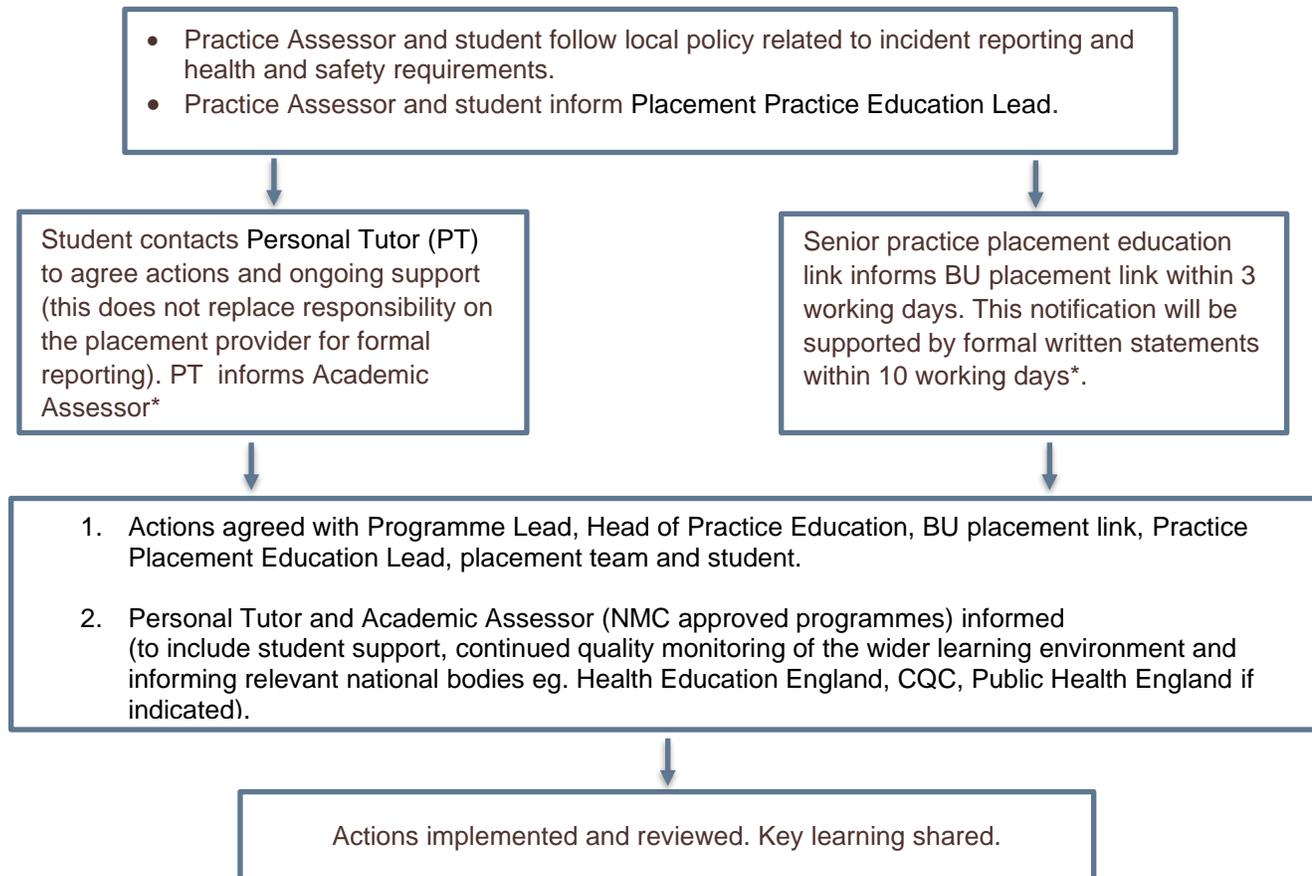
Senior practice education link updates Head of Practice Education.  
Collaborative actions agreed (including regular and outcome feedback to student).

Useful resource:

Recording your concerns, page 11

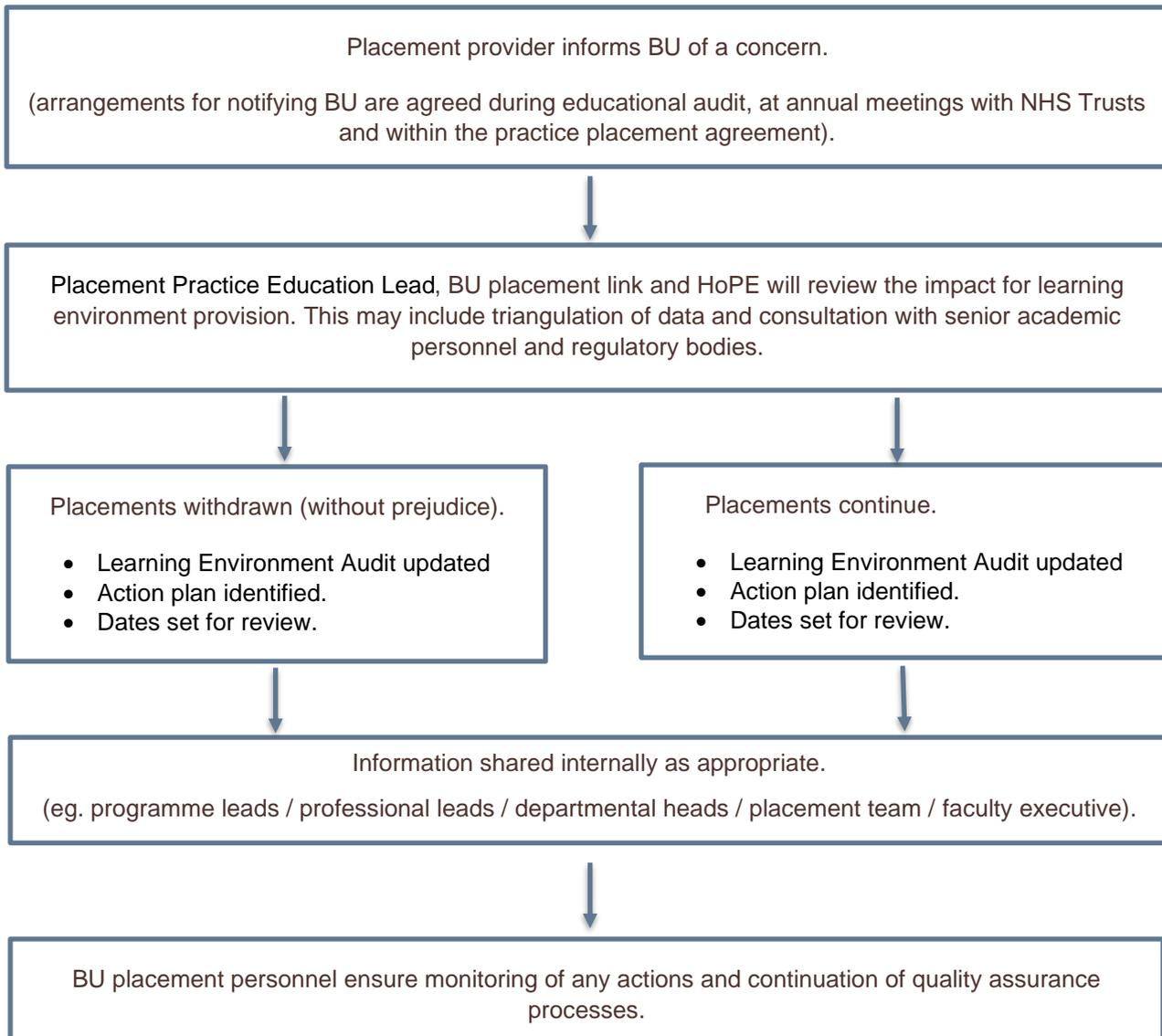
### 3.SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORTING.

This algorithm outlines the process to follow if a student on a practice placement is involved in an incident that would meet practice placement policy for reporting. This is in addition to any policies / actions that the placement provider would utilise and reflects the requirement of the education provider to formally notify BU should a student be involved in a serious incident.



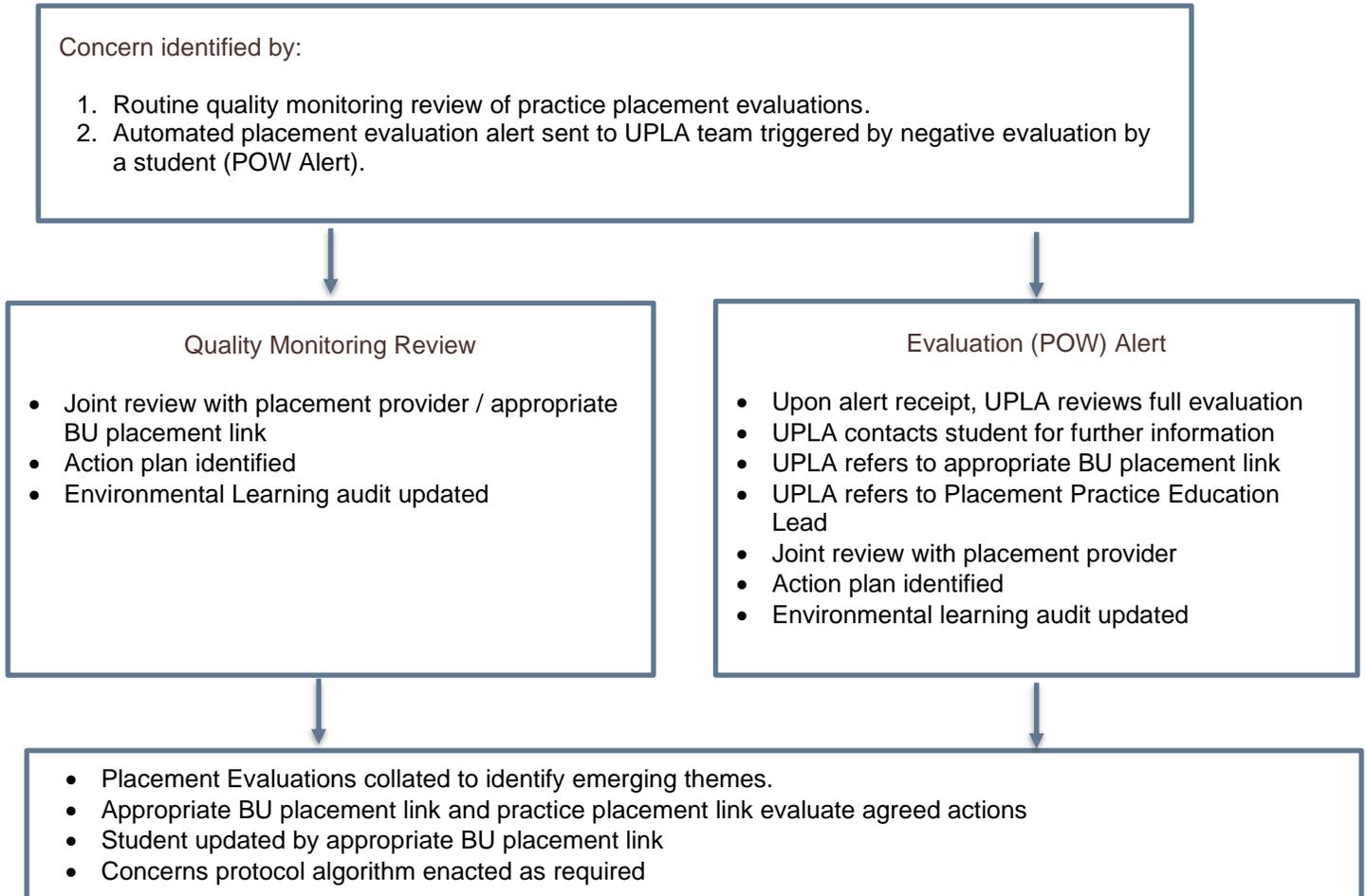
\*For NMC programmes the Academic Assessor must be informed of all concerns relating to achievement in practice.

#### 4. CONCERN RAISED BY MONITORING BODY.



## 5. CONCERN RAISED WITHIN STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF PRACTICE PLACEMENTS.

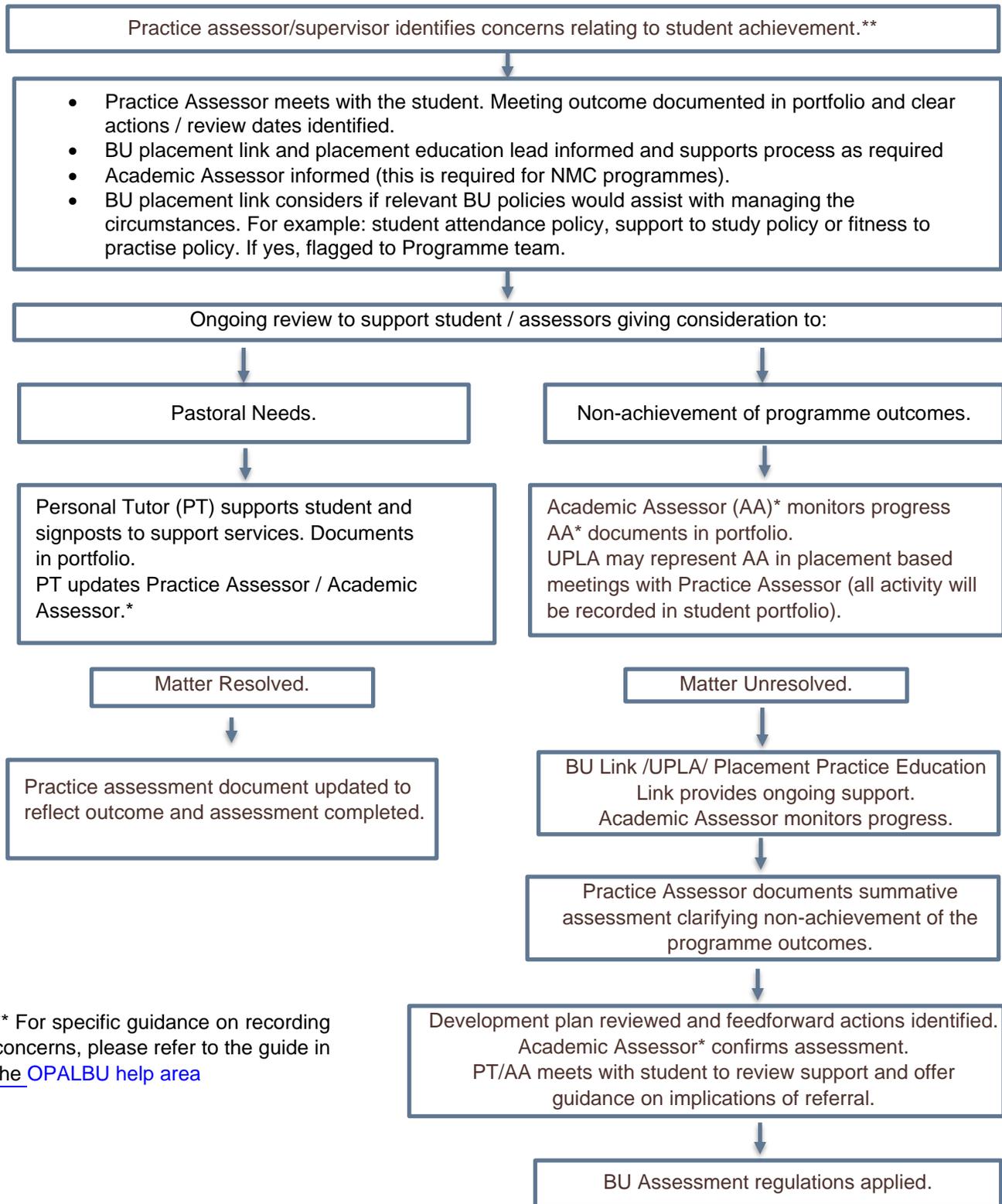
Students on healthcare programmes leading to a professional qualification within the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences are required to complete an evaluation of their practice placement experience. These evaluations are integral to quality assurance process to ensure an effective and safe learning environment. They are held within the electronic placement support system and are accessible by delegated staff at BU / the placement provider. They do not replace the responsibility of the student to raise a concern in a timely manner during their placement.



## 6. PLACEMENT CONCERN REGARDING STUDENT PROGRESSION.

Concerns can include:

- Attendance e.g. changing shifts, not fulfilling required time in placement, punctuality.
- Health and Wellbeing Concerns.
- Progression not as expected given the student's stage in the programme.
- Ongoing failure to comply with local policies and guidelines.



\*\* For specific guidance on recording concerns, please refer to the guide in the [OPALBU help area](#)

\*For NMC programmes the Academic Assessor must be informed of all concerns relating to achievement in practice.

## 7. STUDENT CONDUCT INDICATES THAT PLACEMENT PROVISION WILL BE WITHDRAWN.

The placement provider identifies significant concerns about a student's performance in practice. Feedback, assessment, action planning and collaboration between placement provider and University personnel are inappropriate due to the severity of the concern creating an untenable level of risk. (see algorithm 3 – Serious Incident Reporting and algorithm 6 – Placement concerns regarding student progression).

Rationale to withdraw placement provision confirmed with the Placement Practice Education Lead. This will usually involve consultation with the BU placement link or Academic Assessor\* or BU Head of Practice Education. In any event BU personnel listed will liaise and agree actions as soon as details known. Summary of key concerns and rationale for decision formally shared in writing by education lead.

- Student informed of decision to withdraw practice without prejudice to enable review of concerns.
- The Practice Assessor and Academic Assessor\* record rationale for decision in student portfolio including a failure of relevant outcome(s) with support from BU placement link.
- Student advised to contact Personal Tutor and Programme Lead at earliest opportunity.
- The Personal Tutor / Academic Assessor informs the Programme Lead who implements relevant BU policy as required, usually Fitness to Practise policy.

Supporting statements from placement provider will be shared within 5 working days and sent to Programme Lead and Head of Practice Education.

Programme Lead / Personal Tutor and Academic Assessor\* agree actions to support student and implement relevant Bournemouth University Processes.

Academic Assessor\* updates placements team of decision to withdraw placement.

Head of Practice Education / BU placement link agree actions for updating placement with Programme Lead and Academic Assessor.

Programme Lead proceeds with relevant process and updates Head of Practice Education of outcome. Head of Practice Education will review outcome with senior practice placement education link.

\*For NMC programmes the Academic Assessor must be informed of all concerns relating to achievement in practice. Some placement related activity may be delegated to the BU placement link.

## Student Guidance

It can be difficult to speak up. As a student, you complete a range of placements and this in itself can be a barrier to speaking up. We are here to support you in managing your concern. Professional practice requires registrants to question and speak up when unsure. In your practice assessment document, there are specific proficiencies that relate to this professional skill. Being able to speak up is essential for safe patient care, effective team working and your personal health and well-being.

**By speaking up you are promoting a high-quality environment for learning and care.**

### When should you seek support and ‘speak up’

Seeking support is a professional strength. If you have a concern, talking to someone can ensure you are supported to address the concern. It also helps us to identify how the learning experience can be improved and so, by speaking up, you are supporting your future profession.

Look at the following questions, if you answer yes to just one, talk to someone.

No	Ask yourself	Yes	S P E A K  UP!
	Would I be concerned if a family member were being cared for?		
	Does the situation make me uncomfortable?		
	Do I need help to manage this concern?		
	If I do nothing, will I continue to feel uncomfortable?		
	If I do nothing, could it impact on patient care?		
	If I do nothing, could it continue to be an issue for future learners?		

### Who can you go to for support?

The hardest step can be speaking to someone. The most important thing is to tell someone. We can then help you to manage the situation. Here is a list of people you can go to.

Within your Placement Provider Organisation	Within your Education Provider (BU)
Practice supervisors, assessors, mentors	Personal Tutor / Academic Assessor
Other team members	Peer Assisted Learning link/ Student Rep
Placement learner link	Student Union
The placement manager	Welfare Team
The practice education team	BU placement link
Freedom to Speak up Guardian	<a href="#">University Practice Learning Adviser Team</a>
Union / Professional Organisation	<a href="mailto:upla@bournemouth.ac.uk">upla@bournemouth.ac.uk</a>

At Bournemouth University, the [University Practice Learning Adviser team](#) are here to help you address your concerns. Email the team and arrange a time to talk things through and be supported in talking the next steps.

### Identifying your concern

To help you articulate your concerns it is helpful to make some notes as to the concern. This can help you to be objective when you may be feeling anxious or nervous.

- What is my concern? This may be specific event or a series of events that have caused a growing discomfort.
- Who was involved?
- Are they able to corroborate your concern?
- Have you reviewed relevant documents? E.g. care plan, policy, university guidance
- Were there other factors involved? For example, staffing levels, your previous experience, resources available.
- Did you discuss these concerns with a member of the placement team? If not, why not?
- Is there anything else you need to consider?
- What would have made a difference?

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.

## Recording your Concern

You may be asked to write a statement detailing your concern.

We ask that you always seek support when completing a statement. Please speak to your Personal Tutor/ BU placement link/ University Practice Learning Adviser for guidance and support. It helps to make notes at the time to help you.

Include the following:-

- Date and time
- A brief description of the event(s) that gave rise to your concern
- Clarify why you were concerned objectively. E.g. rather than I was uncomfortable consider using I was concerned that ..... would compromise.....
- Clarify any action you have taken, e.g. informed the practice education team, unit manager

A useful resource to support statement writing can be located at:

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/statements>

*Example, you are advised that you will be undertaking the role of a Health Care Support Worker due to a staffing issue. You are concerned as you are supernumerary and require appropriate supervision. You are worried that you will breach your scope of practice. You didn't speak up at the time as the team are really nice and so busy. It felt wrong to question. You have been very worried about the situation but don't know if this is acceptable.*

*The outcome:-*

- *You raise your concern to the BU practice learning adviser ([upla@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:upla@bournemouth.ac.uk)).*
- *The BU placement link raises this with the Practice Education team*
- *The Practice Education team investigate and clarify student roles on placement*
- *The rota is reviewed to ensure consistent supervision is provided for you and all other learners.*
- *You have demonstrated effective professional values which supports your practice assessment*



## Supernumerary Status

Whilst completing the pre-registration programme, there is a requirement that students are awarded supernumerary status. Supernumerary status is defined as:

*‘a learning strategy that facilitates effective supervision and assessment of student practice whilst upholding the practitioner’s duty of care. This enables the assessor to provide exposure to relevant practice whilst the student is required to engage fully in order to develop their fitness for purpose and practice.’*

(Shepherd and Uren, 2014)

Supernumerary status enables students to have the time to develop their knowledge, skills and professional attributes by fully engaging in learning opportunities with appropriate levels of supervision. Students are reminded of the importance to not exceed their ‘scope of practice’. For students with professional registration such as Nurse Associate Registrants, this can be challenging. As a student they are required to adhere to the student policies and expectations for practice. If there is a concern that supernumerary status is at risk of being compromised, the university and relevant practice education teams must be informed (Algorithm 1).

As a student, you will be aware of the challenges teams can face in practice. It can be difficult to identify if you have been required to act in the place of another team member or not been in receipt of relevant supervision.

The following table can help you to make that decision in an objective way.

Placement Area time	Date /	
Consideration	Yes/ No	Comments
Why did the event occur? E.g. staff sickness		
Were you provided with support? E.g regular supervision,		If no, escalate
Was a risk assessment completed? E.g. scope of practice		If no, escalate
Were the Senior Team informed?		If no, escalate
Were the Practice Education Team informed?		If no, escalate
Did you speak up at the time?		If no, reflect on what prevented you. Talk to your personal tutor or contact the UPLA team
Do you still have concerns?		If yes, talk to your personal tutor or contact the UPLA team. We are here to help
Could the situation have been managed differently?		Let us know your thoughts, it can make a difference.