

Are Registered Nurse or Allied Health Professional Apprentices Supernumerary?

(Updated March 2018)

All Apprentices must have an [apprenticeship agreement](#). This sets out how long you'll employ them for, the training you'll give them, their working conditions, the qualifications they are working towards. The apprentice agreement covers all the hours they are employed and undertaking the training (both on and off the job) toward the competence in the named occupation. In the case of healthcare professional programmes such as nursing and allied health professions, the position can be slightly confusing because during the 'training' which includes the practice placements the apprentices may need to be supernumerary. Both the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) provide guidance on this matter:

For Nurses the NMC state:

"Programme providers must ensure that students are supernumerary during all practice learning. Supernumerary means that the student will not, as part of their programme of preparation, be contracted by any person or body to provide nursing care". (NMC 2010)

If an employer wishes to employ the apprentice nurse part time in some other role these hours are not supernumerary. However, these hours would be outside of the apprenticeship agreement and require a separate contract of employment e.g. as a Senior Healthcare Support Worker. These hours would not be counted toward practice learning hours required for programme (apprenticeship) completion.

For Allied Health Professional the guidance from HCPC is as follows:

The term supernumerary is not specifically used within HCPC education standards and guidance. The HCPC recognise that learners can be appropriately and safely supported in different ways, and their standards provide flexibility for education providers to consider how this might be achieved. This would include consideration regarding the supernumerary status of learners in practice.

Specifically, the HCPC standards for education and training (SETs) require that: "Practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users" (HCPC SET 5.4, 2017). Education providers must ensure that learners work within a scope of practice that is appropriate to their level of skills and experience. This is likely to develop for an individual learner as they progress during the course of the programme and the practice-based learning they take part in should reflect this. Education providers must also consider other factors in providing a safe environment for service users, such as the level of supervision and autonomy (independence) that learners have.