# **Frequently asked questions**

**Part of the**

**Multi Professional Quality Assurance of the Practice Learning Environment Toolkit**



## Frequently asked questions

1. **When do I need to use this quality assurance toolkit?**

The toolkit is to help assure a learning environment for learners in a wide variety of organisations and it should be used when an organisation is supporting a learner with an academic requirement and needs a practice experience. See below regarding the type of professional group (Question 3 and Question 5).

1. **Why do I need to use it?**

The quality assurance toolkit provides a method to assure the learning environment. It provides practice and education providers with a process to demonstrate assurance of the learning environment and complying with regulatory standards. It is used alongside the NHS Education Funding agreement 2024-2027 and a practice placement agreement (or equivalent apprentice documentation).

1. **Can I complete the toolkit for all learners?**

Health Education England (now NHS England, Workforce, Training & Education Directorate) set out clear expectations for the quality of healthcare learning environments through the development of the Quality Framework (2021-24). The framework has been mapped against a group of regulators to ensure it provides appropriate level of assurance and can be aligned with each relevant profession standards. The regulators were the General Medical Council, General Pharmaceutical Council (MPharm, Foundation year, and pharmacy technicians), Health and Social Care Professions Council, Ofsted, Nursing and Midwifery Council, and Social Work England.  The regulatory mapping was undertaken in 2022. The mapping exercise didn't include dentistry, healthcare scientists, psychological therapy regulators or advancing practice and therefore wouldn't provide assurance for these professional groups at this stage.

The toolkit does not assure the clinical learning environment for post graduate medics and pharmacists, as well as dentists, healthcare scientist, psychological professions, or professionals who are undertaking advancing practice qualifications; for these professions there exists alternative processes.

1. **Can I complete the toolkit for all types of organisations?**

The toolkit has been designed to be a flexible tool whereby you can use it across voluntary, independent, private, and local authority areas, as well as in the NHS. It can be used in small practice areas to much larger organisations.

1. **I am placing a learner into primary care in the Southeast region.  Which assurance process do I use?**

Across the southeast, there exists a method of assuring the clinical environment for multiple learners in primary care, across a primary care network (PCN) or other ‘at scale’ learning environment (e.g., a GP Federation). The PCN level assurance is used in Kent, Surrey & Sussex (KSS), Hampshire & the Isle of Wight (HIOW), and Thames Valley (TV). Additional information can be found:

<https://kss.hee.nhs.uk/primary-care/clinical-learning-environments-and-triggered-quality-assessments/>

<https://wessex.hee.nhs.uk/wider-workforce/tvw-primary-care-school/tvw-pcs-training-hubs/development-opportunities/primary-care-network-level-learning-environment/>

Where there exists in place a PCN level assurance, there is no need use this toolkit. If you are placing a learner into primary care, you will need to clarify if the environment has been assured at a PCN (or other ‘at scale’) level, and we would recommend contacting the following training hubs for clarification:

Thames Valley & Hampshire & the Isle of Wight: [england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net](mailto:england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net)

Kent, Surrey, and Sussex: [england.ksspc.pcschool@nhs.net](mailto:england.ksspc.pcschool@nhs.net)

1. **When do I need to use each of the tools?**

There are two tools – an approval tool and an ongoing monitoring tool. The approval tool is used in the first instance:

* To update a previous audit,
* If taking learners for the first time or
* If taking a different type of learner with a different regulator.

Once the approval tool has been completed, it should be shared with all providers. The approval tool is completed once only. The ongoing monitoring tool is completed:

* 3 years after the approval tool
* Following the first placement (for a new learning environment)
* Or when there are concerns to the quality of the learning environment at an amber level (see escalation guidance below)

The monitoring tool is designed to be a light touch ‘back stop’, which enables practice and an education provider to collaborate and discuss the learning environment using their quality metrics.   The monitoring tool can trigger the approval tool if there is a quality concern highlighted following these discussions.

1. **When do I use the action plan table or the escalation process?**

The action plan table can be used at all stages of the process; it can help support a clinical learning environment or be part of the tools. We would encourage the action plan be used flexibly and reflect the needs of each situation.

The escalation and triangulation guidance provides a method for organisations to follow a recommended practice at a risk level. It helps ensure lower level; persistent issues are escalated. If a risk is assessed at an amber level, the monitoring tool is then used to provide a ‘back stop’, as well as providing a trigger (at the red level) for the approval tool.

1. **I work in a non-NHS setting; can I use the assurance toolkit?**

Yes, the toolkit has been designed to be used in non-NHS settings.

1. **I work in a very small business. Can I get support to complete the toolkit?**

Yes, there is additional information on the website to help understand the requirements.  The two exemplars have been designed to help organisations complete the paperwork. An organisation may have links with a local educational or workforce lead who can help support, and finally there is an email ([england.quality.wx@nhs.net](mailto:england.quality.wx@nhs.net)) in all footers that can support any additional queries.

1. **Where can I find the documents?**

The team have placed all documents on the following [NHS England WT&E website.](https://wessex.hee.nhs.uk/quality/quality-learning-workplace/multi-professional-quality-assurance-toolkit/)

1. **I have apprentice learners; do I follow the same process?**

Yes, the toolkit has been designed to be used for both employed and non-employed learners.

1. **I have a student issue; can I use the action plan without the other tools?**

Yes, the action plan table can be used to help a learner as well as being part of the approval / monitoring tools of the clinical learning environment.

1. **I heard about the new safe learning environment charter (SLEC).  Can I use the SLEC self-assessment matrix alongside the assurance toolkit?**

Yes - The SLEC will provide a key mechanism to help support the learners in practice, and the self-assessment matrix provides an organisation with the opportunity to reflect on their current compliance. The matrix and SLEC recommendations have been embedded throughout the exemplar materials, and cross references to it.  The SLEC is learner focused and doesn't replace the ongoing monitoring tool.

1. **Do I need an approved education institution (AEI) representative i.e. university?**

Yes, an education representative needs to help support the full process (approval and monitoring tools, and escalation process). The process supports a collaborative process between practice and education providers. Each of the providers have their own data and will be able to provide a full perspective of the learning environment.

1. **Do I have to complete a separate toolkit for each learner group i.e. nursing *and* physiotherapy for example?**

No, the toolkit can be completed once for all learners in the same learning space (see professions who are in scope – question 3.)  It is designed to assure a learning environment rather than a placement or specific learner.

1. **What's the timeframe to complete?**

The approval tool needs to be completed before the start of the learner’s practice experience. There isn't an expectation that all standards are met, but the environment would need to have completed the approval tool (with an action plan if needed) alongside the practice placement agreement and NHS Education funding agreement.

The monitoring tool is completed at the end of the first placement experience as required.

1. **Is there a requirement that constitutes achieved in the toolkit?**

No, this is reflective of professional judgement. There are a wide range of organisations taking learners in practice, from our very small providers of placements to the largest NHS trusts.  Each organisation will provide different amounts of evidence. Please see exemplars as part of the suite of supporting information.

1. **I have a group of clinical learning environments i.e. a group of wards. Can I complete the toolkit for more than one area?**

Yes, the toolkit has been designed to assure more than one environment (in one approval) i.e. a group of wards. We are encouraging organisations to consider a cluster approach.

1. **I have only just completed the approval tool. Do I need to update this with the new paperwork?**

No. If you have completed the approval tool using the 2023 paperwork (V4) you don't need to update onto the new 2024 paperwork (V5). We would though recommend any future activity with the practice toolkit, please use the paperwork outlined on the [website.](https://wessex.hee.nhs.uk/quality/quality-learning-workplace/multi-professional-quality-assurance-toolkit/)