



University of Wolverhampton

**Cervical Cytology Mentor Guidance**

Advanced Diploma in General Practice Nursing New Cervical  
Cytology Sample Taker Training

## Introduction

This guidance will provide clarity on the mentor role and responsibilities in order to promote consistency in training and assessment of a new cervical sample taker. The role will be to support General Practice Nurses who are undertaking the Advanced Diploma; Fundamentals in General Practice Nursing course at University of Wolverhampton. The course is a 12 month undergraduate programme that incorporates cervical cytology new sample taker training. In order to quality assure the cervical cytology training the cervical cytology mentor ('mentor' from this point) will be identified by the new sample taker and liaise with the university course leader. The mentor will be expected to support the trainee in their practical sample taker training within their workplace and confirm their achievement for progression to final evaluation and clinical assessment.

This document adheres to Education Pathway (Public Health England 2020).

## Criteria to become a cervical cytology Mentor

The role of the mentor is separate from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2018) academic assessor, supervisor and practice assessor roles. However, it is recommended that the mentor holds a relevant mentoring and /or teaching qualification.

The mentor will be from one of a UK registered health professional groups identified below:

- NMC registered nurse
- NMC registered midwife
- PAMVR registered physician associate
- GMC registered medical doctor

The mentor must have at least 12 months of continuous experience following initial cervical sample taker training and be a practicing cervical sample taker; performing a minimum of 50 samples following completion of the initial sample taker training. The mentor must have effective communication skills.

The mentor is asked to provide evidence of certification of completion of cervical cytology sample taker training and certificate of attendance to 3 yearly update (if applicable) at the start of the theory sample taker training by completing and returning the form (appendix 1).

## Professional Responsibility and Accountability

The mentor is expected to maintain their professional competence by

- Attending a formal cervical screening update minimum 3 yearly following initial sample taker training. The [national eLearning resource for sample takers](#) meets the programme requirements for update training.

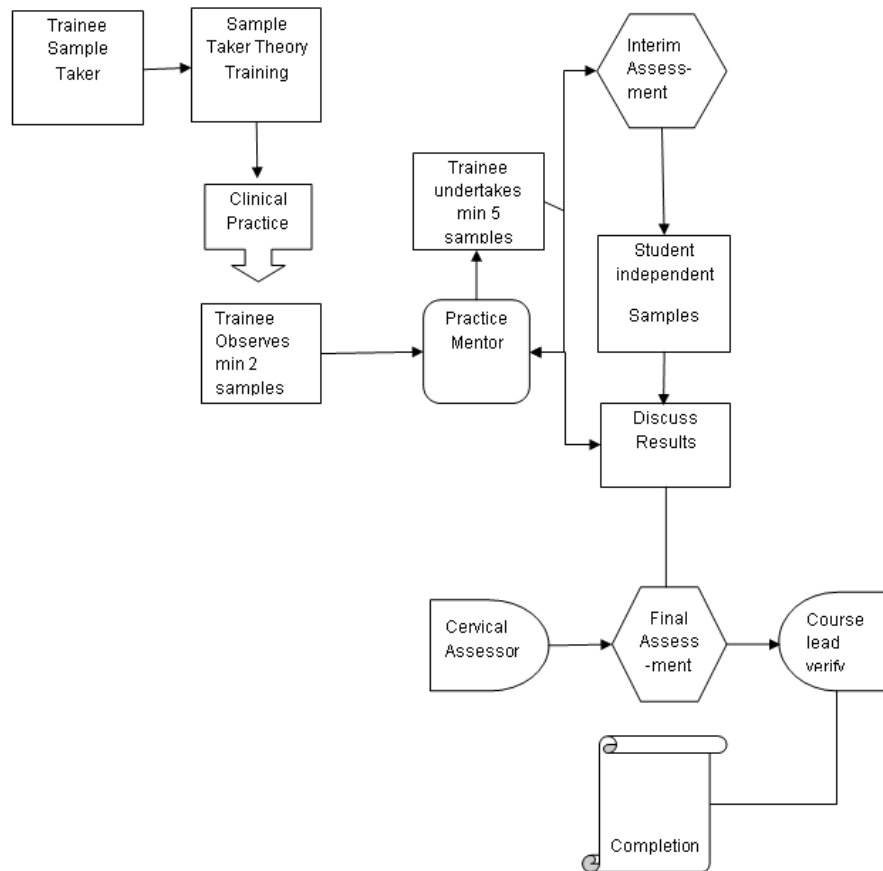
- Stay updated with any local and or national changes to the cervical screening programme (including equipment and sample preparation)
- Show continuing competence in taking cervical samples in accordance to their professional codes
- Meet their professional obligations for continuing professional development (CPD)
- Audit and reflect on their individual rates of abnormal test results and sample acceptance as reported by the local cervical screening laboratory (see [NHS CSP guidance on sample acceptance](#))

## The Training Programme

The cervical cytology sample taker training is a 9 month course. Built into the fundamentals course the trainee will begin by undertaking theory training within the university.

- Directed pre-course reading (approximately 3 hours) A&P workbook
- Initial full day screening theory learning (lecture)
  - **Topic 1:** the NHS CSP
  - Topic 2:** background to cervical screening
  - Topic 3:** organisation of the NHS CSP
  - Topic 4:** equality of access to cervical screening
  - Topic 5:** cervical screening sample requests
  - Topic 6:** understanding the test results
  - Topic 7:** anatomy and physiology of the pelvic organs
  - Topic 8:** practical aspects of taking cervical samples (skills lab)
- Trainee has to arrange a visit to a colposcopy clinic (recommended within 3 months of theory)
- Undertake a visit to a cervical screening laboratory (where logistics permit) or a virtual tour set up by the university
- to observe the mentor taking at least 2 cervical samples
- practical training (supervised and unsupervised clinical practice)
  - student to take at least 5 cervical samples directly supervised by the mentor
  - satisfactory completion of the interim assessment before starting unsupervised practice (conducted by the mentor)
  - Student to take 20 acceptable cervical samples without direct supervision and no more than 25 up to the point of final assessment
- External cytology assessor undertakes a final clinical assessment of a minimum of 3 samples and discussion to determine competence.
- submission of the completed training record (verified by the trainee, mentor, assessor and training provider)

## New Sample Taker Training



## Practical Training

The trainee should be familiar with the consultation and screening process before starting their supervised practice.

People attending the clinic for their cervical screen must consent to the presence of the trainee before the consultation starts. Notify people in advance that the individual who is observing the procedure or taking their sample (as applicable) is:

- a qualified professional
- undergoing specialist training under supervision
- being assessed

The mentor must directly supervise the trainee taking a minimum of 5 samples in the first practical sessions (the mentor must document this in the training record). Both the mentor and trainee must be able to fully view and assess the cervix and full sample taking technique.

If additional training or supervision is required, address these needs before moving on to the interim assessment. Use Skills for Health (2010) [CHS37 'Obtaining cervical cytology samples from women'](#) to inform additional training needs.

## Interim Assessment

Before moving onto unsupervised practice the trainee must first successfully complete an interim assessment undertaken by the mentor. This offers assurance to the mentor and the university that the sample taker is confident and safe to proceed.

PHE provides a library of 24 numbered images of cervixes for use in the interim assessment. To access this library, staff must [register on the Health Education England \(HEE\) eLearning for Health website](#).

Once registered, click on the module title and follow the instructions.

For the interim assessment, the trainee should be able to:

- apply their knowledge of basic anatomy and physiology to recognise the features of a healthy cervix and identify correctly which images are normal and abnormal
- make an assessment of the appearance of the cervix
- state if they would take a cervical sample, and if so describe how they would do it (using the correct sampling device to demonstrate this)
- identify correctly the type of os seen
- identify correctly the squamo columnar junction (SCJ) and the area known as the transformation zone (TZ)

Upon discussion the trainee should understand:

- common vulval, vaginal and cervical conditions and how to approach these
- how to recognise situations where specialist advice may be required
- when an individual should be referred directly for routine or urgent colposcopy

### Mentor responsibility interim assessment:

Select a minimum of 5 images from the library to discuss with the trainee, identify which images have been used within the training record. The trainee reviews the case information for each image selected. For each image selected, the trainee discusses the screening needs of that person. The mentor uses the screening history and clinical information provided for each image as trigger points for discussion.

The mentor can prompt the trainee during the discussion. For example, ask the trainee:

- to consider whether they would do anything further in addition to taking the sample
- how they would advise the person if they identify any normal cervical conditions, and what action is required

- whether any specialist advice is needed
- whether they would refer the individual for routine or urgent colposcopy (check their understanding of the follow up pathway)
- to describe what information they would enter on the sample request form

If the trainee does not identify an image correctly as normal or abnormal, gives an incorrect or vague response or offers both correct and inaccurate information in their response, the mentor should select another image for the trainee to review. The trainee and mentor should also revisit any incorrectly answered image, with the mentor providing the correct feedback.

We recommend the mentor allows a maximum of 90 minutes for the interim assessment. The mentor documents the discussion and trainee responses within the training record. The trainee writes a reflective learning account of the interim assessment.

The mentor must be satisfied that the trainee is confident and safe to proceed to their unsupervised clinical practice. If the trainee does not complete the assessment satisfactorily within the allocated time, the mentor should agree and document an action plan with the trainee and repeat the interim assessment. The mentor should notify the university if there is any concern about progress at this stage.

## The Training Record

The training record is a vital part of the learning process. The university provides the trainee with the training record template at the start of their new sample taker training. It is the trainee's responsibility to ensure that their personal training record is kept up to date and is complete before the final assessment is arranged and is signed and dated where appropriate before final submission. The trainee is advised that this record **MUST** be retained for a minimum of 3 years. The University also retains a copy for 3 years.

As a minimum, the training record will include evidence of the trainee's:

- attendance at the initial theoretical training course
- trainee's learning plan
- visit to a cervical screening laboratory as part of the above (logistics permitting – record date attended and signature of host); a virtual tour is acceptable where this is part of the theory course and supplemented by information from the local cervical screening laboratory
- visit to a colposcopy unit - record date attended, duration of clinic(s) and signature of host
- interim assessment
- evidence of clinical practice (x2 observed, x5 supervised and x20 unsupervised records)
- reflective review and audit of 20 acceptable cervical samples

It is the mentor's responsibility to document their observations and complete a report on the trainee's clinical competence to practice.

## Managing Trainee Performance

The training period is a maximum of 9 months. If the trainee has not completed within 12 months they must stop taking samples and the university course lead will put an action plan in place along with the student, mentor and employer with a set time frame for completion. The allocated assessor will be kept up to date with the progress of this in order to arrange the final assessment.

If a trainee fails to achieve the required standards of competency at the final clinical assessment, the assessor must advise the trainee to stop taking cervical samples. The assessor must then notify the university who will in turn notify the trainee's mentor, employer and the local cervical screening laboratory service.

After any failed attempt to achieve satisfactory competence, the training provider, trainee, mentor, assessor and their employer must consider whether or not continued support is appropriate. The trainee's employer is responsible for making the final decision. If supported to continue, in order to ensure safe practice the trainee must repeat both the initial and practical training in full. An action plan will be developed to address the training issues.

## Ongoing support for the mentor

In order to support the ongoing duties of the assessor the university will provide regular forums where training issues can be discussed. This forum will also be offered to the identified assessors of the trainees on the course therefore offering a wider network for collaborative working and clinical supervision. Through the forum an update to the expected roles will be provided on an annual basis.

## Contact Details

**Course Lead: Lisa Clarke:** Email: [Lisa.Clarke@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:Lisa.Clarke@wlv.ac.uk)      Tele: 01902 518891

## References

Public Health England (2020) *Education Pathway* [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-cervical-sample-taker-training/training-for-cervical-sample-takers-education-pathway#section4>

Skills for Health (2010) *Obtain cervical cytology samples from individuals* [online] Available at: <https://tools.skillsforhealth.org.uk/competence/show/html/id/1030/>

Appendix 1

**Professional Declaration Mentor Form**

<b>Trainee Name</b>	
<b>Mentor Name:</b>	
<b>Designation:</b>	
<b>Base:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Date Initial Cytology Training</b>	
<b>Date of last cytology update</b>	
<b>Please indicate professional practice below</b>	
<b>Practising sample taker.</b>	
<b>Have had a minimum of 12 months continuous experience following completion of initial training</b>	
<b>Have undertaken a minimum of 50 samples following completion of initial sample taker training</b>	
<b>Sign and date form</b>	

When completed please return to

**Course Lead: Lisa Clarke:** Email: [Lisa.Clarke@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:Lisa.Clarke@wlv.ac.uk)