



## **RCN and RCNi Education, Learning and Development Strategy 2021-2024**

Underpinning evidence in the development and enhancement of RCN Quality Assurance Framework

# **The Participant Journey Policies**

CORPORATE



# Acknowledgements

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# Background

The RCN and RCNi is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive and inspirational learning environment, where the entire health and social care workforce feel encouraged to share their knowledge, skills and experience. All education, learning and development are included in the RCN and RCNi Education, Learning and Development Strategy (ELD). This includes informal, formal/accredited programmes, practical/skills-based, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (including for revalidation) and Lifelong Learning (LLL) which contributes to career development and progression.

At the commencement of the RCN and RCNi ELD Strategy project it was identified that a review of the quality assurance models underpinning the delivery of education and learning required a formal evidence review. Four workstream pillars undertook an evidence review of the following aspects of education, learning and development:

- Pillar 1 Identifying a programme framework – a needs assessment for ELD activity
- Pillar 2 Identifying the policies required to underpin the learner journey
- Pillar 3 Assessment of learning activity
- Pillar 4 Evaluation of learning activity

Each of these workstream pillars had a range of stakeholders involved in task and finish groups. Staff stakeholders were engaged from across the RCN and RCNi and across the UK. The outputs from these workstreams were scrutinised by the RCN Professional Nursing Committee Task and Finish group for the development of the ELD Strategy.

The Royal College of Nursing offers both trade union and professional learning, education, advice and support for our members and RCNi, our group publishing house which offers learning through RCNi learning. This strategy is the first ever opportunity to address education learning and development as a joint offer for the UK.

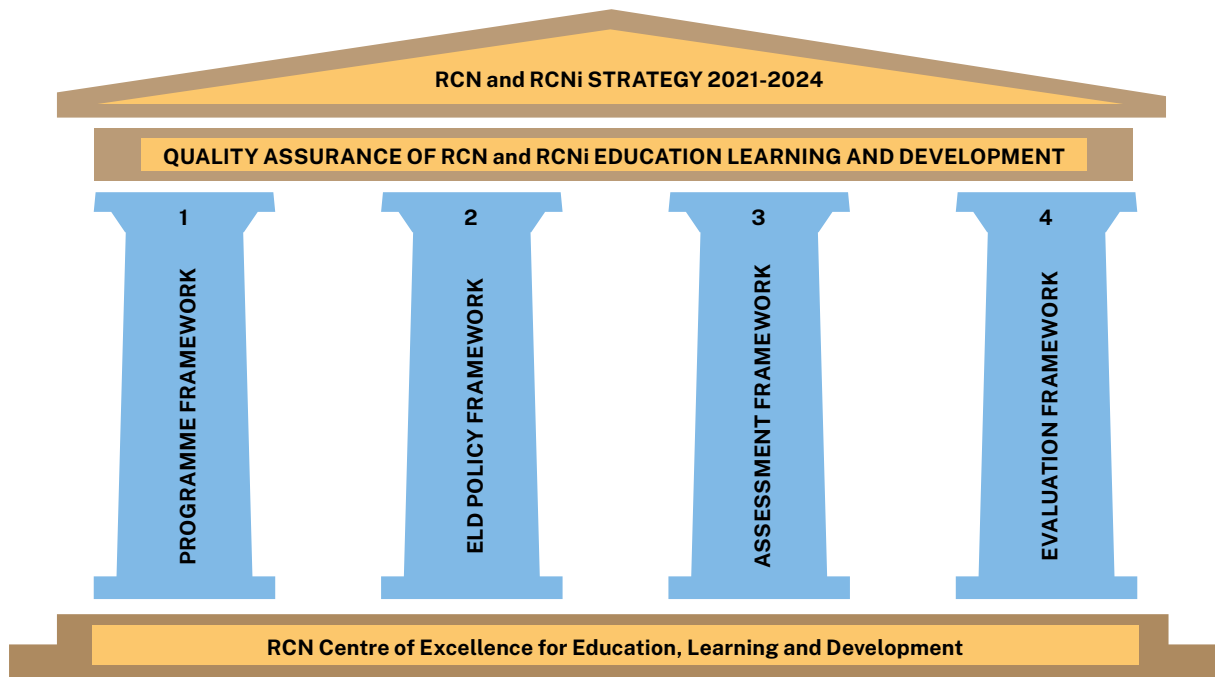
The RCN and RCNi ELD Strategy vision is:

‘To provide RCN leadership and influence across the entire UK health and social care workforce through the provision of quality education, learning and development.’

The ELD offer will enable the development of a competent and capable workforce, influencing, leading and delivering person centred safe and effective health and social care. The ELD Strategy supports the growth, recruitment and retention of the entire workforce.

The figure below outlines the quality assurance processes required for the development of all education and learning resources.

Fig. 1: Four pillars for developing education, learning and development



## 2.0 Introduction

The remit of this workstream was to undertake a critical review of learner/participant policies for education provision at Higher Education Institution (HEI) level, report on our findings and make recommendations for the policies to be developed by the RCN and RCNi.

All RCN policies and procedures set rules and courses of action to maintain good standards of practice which reflect the RCN charter of promoting the art and science of nursing. They are also a tool to identify and mitigate risks. A conceptual model organises the learning offer into five focus points and this in turn has informed the chapters recommendation for policies and procedure to underpin education learning and development provision by the RCN and RCNi.

The objective was to ensure that education and learning is developed and delivered to a consistently high standard and that the intended learning outcomes are reliably met. A review of the literature offered evidence of the benefits and challenges of robust policies and procedures underpinning education and learning. This review has informed the development of the conceptual model and subsequent recommendations.

### 2.1 The aim

To ensure that education and learning is developed and delivered to a consistently high standard and that the intended learning outcomes are reliably met.

## 2.2 The project objectives

	<b>Original project objective</b>	<b>Outcome measures</b>
1	To create a suite of policies and procedures which underpin the education learning and development delivered by the RCN and RCNi	... development of a range of policies which will set standards and require formal processes to ensure that education and learning provided by the RCN is fair and of excellent quality
2	to undertake a review of existing policies from higher education institutions (HEI)	... a report to make recommendations which will include best practice within the policies and protocols developed by the RCN and RCNi
3	to consider equality and inclusion references and impacts contained within existing policies and procedures	... make recommendations regarding equality impact assessments linked to policies developed
4	to ensure that the review covers all countries with the UK	... invite feedback from stakeholders in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England
5	to explore all aspects of a learner's journey through a broad diversity of learning opportunities	... create a conceptual model which will inform requirements for inclusion in future policies



## 2.3 Background

Discussing health policy, Traynor (2013) describes the drivers as not only political views and ideology, but also by research and the influence of interested groups. Blakemore and Warwick-Booth, (2013) suggest that policies in the UK relating to devolved issues may lead to different influences and priorities in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Cook (2006) asserts that policies are heavily influenced by an organisations values and beliefs. They are deemed essential by some and despised by others who find them rigid and restrictive. She sees some clear benefits that policies and procedures bring to an organisation and the workforce. These include, the opportunity to plan ahead and assess the likely impact of a new policy, the ability to introduce new ways of working, the development of staff and providing an opportunity for staff to engage with the development process and influence the outcome.

The RCN has an extensive range of policies underpinning operational and human resource areas which are reviewed on a regular basis and ratified in partnership with the recognised trade union where appropriate. The RCN and RCNi has not previously had agreed, organisation wide policies in place to underpin the education and learning it provides.

This workstream was tasked with reviewing the policies that have been developed by higher education institutions in the UK, reach agreement on which aspects of the reviewed policies represent best practice and make recommendations for developing UK wide policies that will underpin the RCN and RCNi's learning offer.

## 2.4 Critical evidence review

The evidence reviews facilitated access to a wide sample of policies. The sections of the sampled policies broadly fell into one of eight identified categories (or themes). These categories will inform the parameters of the policy that needs to be developed or signposted to if a policy already exists and is viable. Once the parameters of each policy are agreed, it will underpin the delivery of the RCN and RCNi Education, Learning and Development Strategy.

### **2.4.1 The eight policy categories identified are as follows:**

1. Student (learner) code of conduct
2. Academic regulation/integrity
3. Student engagement/attendance monitoring
4. Lecture capture and recording



5. Safety
6. Protected characteristics
7. Financial
8. Information technology.

The following table is a collation of the parameters of each policy.

**Table 1: Collation of the parameters of each policy**

<b>Policy category</b>	<b>Parameters</b>
Student code of conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- behaviour within the learning delivery premises, facilities, services</li> <li>- allegation about conduct, types of cases, offences/unacceptable behaviour</li> <li>- dealing with breaches</li> <li>- resolution, disciplinary and appeals</li> <li>- student and HEI responsibilities</li> <li>- student support</li> <li>- respect charter.</li> </ul>
Academic regulation/integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- who the code applies to</li> <li>- expectations for the conduct of assessment, progression, completion of taught components and awards</li> <li>- commitment to UK Code for Quality in Higher Education and benchmarked with Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies</li> <li>- fitness to study</li> <li>- registration</li> <li>- learning agreements</li> <li>- student debt</li> <li>- student responsibilities</li> <li>- poor academic practice</li> <li>- investigations</li> <li>- plagiarism</li> <li>- conduct during exams and tests</li> <li>- consequences including disciplinary</li> <li>- appeals</li> <li>- complaints procedure – student and the public.</li> </ul>

<p>Student engagement/ attendance Monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rationale</li> <li>- expectations</li> <li>- access to own attendance records</li> <li>- notification of absence</li> <li>- monitoring</li> <li>- attendance and engagement</li> <li>- risk to student continuation</li> <li>- appeal.</li> </ul>
<p>Lecture capture and recording</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- requirement for all delivery to be audio or video recorded ('captured')</li> <li>- recognition of lecture capture as potentially part of 'reasonable adjustment'</li> <li>- definition of 'lecture'</li> <li>- consideration of ethics and capturing of sensitive information</li> <li>- use of data capture</li> <li>- permissions (speaker and students)</li> <li>- editing recordings</li> <li>- use of, storage and access to recordings</li> <li>- retention period and destruction of recorded data</li> <li>- copyright, intellectual property rights</li> <li>- consent /opting out</li> <li>- students making their own recordings</li> <li>- information services and staff support.</li> </ul>
<p>Safety and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- safeguarding</li> <li>- fraud</li> <li>- whistleblowing</li> <li>- freedom of information</li> <li>- holistic and psychologically safe learning culture.</li> </ul>
<p>Protected characteristics</p>	<p>The following were referred to in detail in some policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accessibility</li> <li>- each protected characteristic would need to be covered within the policy: age, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.</li> </ul>
<p>Financial/legal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- debt</li> <li>- fees</li> <li>- banking</li> <li>- international nursing</li> <li>- immigration.</li> </ul>
<p>Information technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- library services</li> <li>- social media.</li> </ul>

The working group found that the Open University provided a comprehensive range of policies and procedures which will potentially be useful when developing policies for the

RCN and RCNi. Manchester Metropolitan University (2019) have a robust Student Code of Conduct which clearly sets out the standards of behaviour expected from its students, behaviours that would be deemed misconduct and the process for investigation and addressing allegations made. It also provides clarity on what is not covered in the policy and signposts to the appropriate alternative policy. Edinburgh University in their Code of Conduct (2018) have adopted a formal style again, clearly sets out the expectations of the university and it provides a detailed procedure for dealing with alleged misconduct. The group found the way the procedure was set out unambiguous but quite ridged which may hamper flexibility to deal with different situations and circumstances. The Edinburgh University Code of Conduct claims to have been equality impact assessed but the outcome of the assessment was not attached to the document and there was nothing, apart from a passing reference to health and disability (12.4) and harassment and discrimination (12.8) in the text. It is not therefore clear what actions, if any were taken to mitigate against the impacts identified.

The group examined a range of policies relating to academic regulation and integrity which cover assessment, evaluation, and issues regarding submitted work such as plagiarism. Middlesex University (2019) have a comprehensive policy which is clear and easy to follow. Each student is registered on an “Academic Integrity Awareness Course” which is an indication that steps are taken to inform students of this. The types of misconduct, the level of misconduct and the recommended penalties if upheld, are all set out in the policy along with a useful flowchart. The University of Birmingham’s policy (2020) focusses heavily on plagiarism, again defining responsibilities and levels of misconduct. It was considered less comprehensive by the group.

Neither of the universities appear to have equality impact assessed their policies. The only indication that equality and inclusion had been given any consideration was in appendix B (1.8) of the University of Birmingham policy which noted that students whose second language was English would be allowed to take a dictionary into an examination. The group liked the Student Engagement Policy from the University of Westminster (2018). It is uncomplicated and user friendly, providing all the information needed concisely.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) sets out the core elements related to both standards and quality which it would seem appropriate for policies within the RCN and RCNi to emulate. Please see [Appendix 1](#).

## 2.5 Summary of evidence review

A review of the literature offered evidence of the benefits and challenges of robust policies and procedures underpinning education and learning. The review informed the development of the conceptual model and enabled the group to make recommendations relating to this aspect of the RCN and RCNi ELD Strategy. A range of policies and procedures which underpin the learning offer are needed to ensure that high standards are maintained in terms of content, facilitation, assessment and evaluation. In addition, commissioners and those participating in learning should have clarity about the aims and expectations relating to the learning and development provided. To achieve a comprehensive range of policies and procedures a conceptual framework has been developed which enabled the group to examine what policies are needed and gain an overview of what policies and procedures need to cover. This will inform the policy development process.

There is agreement that equality and inclusion should be a feature of policy development within the RCN and RCNi and consultation on equality impact assessment should be an essential component to implementing the recommendations.

## 2.6 RCN stakeholder process

Stakeholders from across the UK wide RCN and RCNi who are experts from a range of specialities worked together to deliver the workstream. This approach offered a wealth of experience from the professional and trade union aspects of the organisation, the registered and non-registered workforce and other diverse groups. This approach also allowed the opportunity to discuss the range of education and learning opportunities offered by the RCN and RCNi from different perspectives, sharing a collective wisdom.

The first stage was to review the literature and current relevant policy provision within the RCN and RCNi. Policies and procedures relating to education and learning and the professional offer across the UK were not found. However, quality assurance guidance is in place and currently being used e.g. the *RCN Facilitation Standards* (2018).

Furthermore, the Learning, Development and Improvement Team within the RCN Employment Relations Department and their colleagues throughout the UK, who deliver the education modules to RCN representatives have their curriculum assessed and approved by Open College Network London, a national not-for profit awarding organisation that creates and awards qualifications.

Variations in the current education provision around the UK were identified.

- RCN Northern Ireland, post registration nursing programmes for Health and Social Care employed nurses are commissioned by the Department of Health via the Education Commissioning Group; these programmes are Quality Assured by the Northern Ireland Practice & Education Council for nurses employed in the independent Sector. Programmes provided for nurses employed in the Independent Sector are commissioned by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and an evaluation report is sent to the PHA following completion of the programmes.

In addition to the NMC Code (2018) for registrants, the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery provide information about standards for Nursing Assistants and for Health Care Support Workers working in social care in Northern Ireland.

- In Scotland, the Scottish Government commission NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to provide education and training across Scotland for the healthcare workforce, delivering national programmes such as Infection Prevention and Control. NES along with local health boards commission higher education providers to deliver programmes such as Return to Practice and Advanced Nursing Practice. RCN Scotland engage with both universities providing higher education and further education colleges to deliver specific components of their programmes, such as Accountability & Delegation, Record Keeping and Social Media. We also offer a drug administration and calculations workshop which is commissioned on an ERD referral only basis, for registered healthcare professionals currently facing NMC review. We engage with the Independent Sector to deliver bespoke training and education for staff.
- Education and training within the independent and social care sector in Wales varies. There are accredited courses that are delivered via various bodies such as Agored and Social Care Wales. The funding source for these courses varies.

RCN Wales offers a suite of Continuous Professional Development study centre events, these cater for registered nurses, healthcare support workers and student nurses. These events tend to attract people from the care home sector.

The outcome of these reviews and subsequent discussions as a working group, informed the development of the conceptual model ([Appendix 2](#)). The policies and procedures that were regarded as essential to underpin the participants journey through the learning offer were themed into the following focus points:

- Social and Academic Conduct
- Health and Wellbeing
- The Learning Offer
- Expectations
- Reflection and Learning from Experience.

The next stage of the model development was to explore each theme and identify relevant policies and or procedures for each of the five focus points.

Finally, the model makes recommendations for the scope of each policy/procedure in terms of:

- Objective
- Purpose
- Application (if relevant) – (does the policy/procedure apply to learner, facilitator, or both?)
- Cover (scope of the policy/procedure).

The development of this model was based upon the conceptual model for RCN representatives. This is robust, fully tested and quality assured. The recommended model

for the RCN and RCNi ELD Strategy will need to be tested and reviewed on a regular basis.

The RCN Facilitation Standards (2018) were mapped to the themes in the model.

The following examples map to the “learning offer” section of the conceptual framework:

- You, the facilitator, demonstrate holistic practice knowledge within the facilitation relationship – (Social and academic conduct/expectations)
- You, the facilitator, demonstrate knowing the co-learner(s) and acting on this – (Health and well-being/expectations)
- You, the facilitator, demonstrate understanding of, and skill in, facilitating group dynamics and processes – (Expectations)
- You, the facilitator, identify and demonstrate outcomes from your facilitation – (Reflection & learning from experience).

The group discussed and drafted The Participants Charter ([Appendix 3](#)). This document sets out an overview of the expectations of both the learner and the facilitator.

## 2.7 Conclusion

The evidence and outcomes of the working group demonstrated that policies and procedures are important to the learning offer from the RCN and RCNi and are central to maintaining standards and controlling quality. Robust policies will enable the organisation to account for and take responsibility for the RCN and RCNi’s learning offer by assessing and mitigating risk, thus maintaining the reputation of the organisation.

There are clear benefits to having a robust framework to underpin the education and learning offer. The conceptual model offers a robust framework to contribute to policy development taking into consideration the diversity of learning opportunities and flexibility of assessment and evaluation. The model aims to offer a framework to underpin the RCN and RCNi’s range of learning offers across the four nations of the United Kingdom. Individual learning offers will need to be mapped to the model to identify which policies will apply to the specific offer and applied accordingly.

Equality and inclusion assessment and mitigation of identified negative impacts on all protected characteristics should be in place. Consultation around this should take place as policies are drafted, implemented and as they are reviewed.

## 2.8 Recommendations

1. Develop a suite of policies to formalise the range policies and procedures underpinning the development, delivery and evaluation of RCN learning opportunities.
2. Ensure policies are sensitive to differing needs and requirements in education provision in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure a consistent implementation plan across the UK.
3. Ensure policies and procedures will value and promote diversity, equality and inclusion across a diverse healthcare workforce.
4. Develop a system for assessing the equality impact of the policies in a robust and meaningful way which includes mitigation of any negative impact identified.
5. Ensure policies and procedures that promote the very best practice to support an excellent learning culture.

## 2.9 Proposed policies

Recruit a group of stakeholders from throughout the UK with expertise in education and/or policy development. Utilise the conceptual tool and the policy topics identified above to draft a suite of new policies. The template should match the RCN corporate template.



## 2.10 References

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## 2.11 Appendices

### Appendix 1: The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) sets out the core elements related to both standards and quality

- The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualification's framework.
- The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.
- The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks.
- The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.
- Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.
- The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair, and transparent.

#### Quality

- Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
- From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

#### Core practices

- The provider has a reliable, fair, and inclusive admissions system.
- The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.
- The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.

- The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
- Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.
- The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

# Appendix 2: The Conceptual Model

## RCN and RCNi UK Education, Learning and Development Strategy 2021-2026

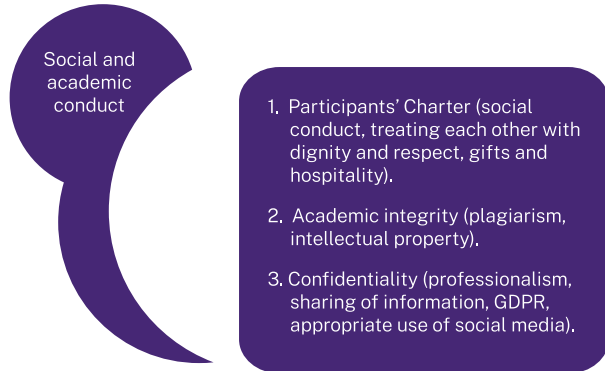
### Pillar 2: The participants' journey through the learning offer



### The learning journey – five focus points



### 1. Social and academic conduct



A purple speech bubble on the left contains the text "Social and academic conduct". To its right is a purple rounded rectangle containing a list of three items.

Social and academic conduct

1. Participants' Charter (social conduct, treating each other with dignity and respect, gifts and hospitality).
2. Academic integrity (plagiarism, intellectual property).
3. Confidentiality (professionalism, sharing of information, GDPR, appropriate use of social media).

### 4. Expectations



An orange rounded rectangle on the left contains a list of five items. To its right is an orange speech bubble containing the text "Expectations".

1. Participant attendance (expectations around attendance, breaks in study, other commitments, maternity/paternity leave).
2. Participation and collaboration.
3. Feedback (facilitator to participant).
4. Assessment of learning (guidance and requirement, late submission, resits, recording decisions, student representation).
5. Fees (refunds, compensation, debt).

Expectations

### 2. Health and wellbeing



A teal speech bubble on the left contains the text "Health and wellbeing". To its right is a teal rounded rectangle containing a list of two items.

Health and wellbeing

1. Support and encouragement (in accordance with RCN Equality and Inclusion Strategy).
2. Sharing concerns (social, academic, learning and assessment issues – complaints and appeals).

### 5. Reflections and learning from experience

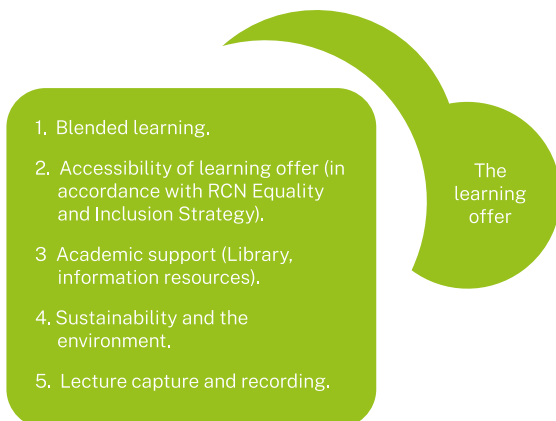


A pink rounded rectangle on the left contains a list of four items. To its right is a pink speech bubble containing the text "Reflection and learning from experience".

1. Evaluation of the learning offer.
2. Feedback (participant to provider).
3. Evaluation of the learning experience and practice development.
4. Programme development in relation to evaluation data and feedback.

Reflection and learning from experience

### 3. The learning offer



A green rounded rectangle on the left contains a list of five items. To its right is a green speech bubble containing the text "The learning offer".

1. Blended learning.
2. Accessibility of learning offer (in accordance with RCN Equality and Inclusion Strategy).
3. Academic support (Library, information resources).
4. Sustainability and the environment.
5. Lecture capture and recording.

The learning offer

# Appendix 3: The draft Participants' Charter

## Royal College of Nursing Participants' Charter

We at the RCN are committed to providing an inclusive, supportive and inspirational learning environment, where all participants feel encouraged to share their knowledge skills and experience.

This charter is based upon the fundamental principles of the RCN Royal Charter and is reviewed on a regular basis in response to feedback from our participants and members.

### As a participant you are expected to:

- Commit to attending all learning elements of the programme, actively engaging and sharing you views and experience.
- Uphold your own professional and academic integrity ensuring you commit the time and effort necessary for success
- Use the information, advice and services provided to develop your learning, seeking support when needed.
- Understand and meet expectations of assessment and being open to feedback.

### You can expect us at the RCN to:

- Provide high quality learning resources to make learning accessible which are assessed fairly and rigorously.
- Offer a variety of high-quality teaching and learning experiences, supporting participants holistically, maximising the use of evidence-based research and practice.
- Commit to clear communication with participants on information relating to their study including programmes, timetables, assessment, and feedback.
- Respond to requests by participants within agreed time scales and provide open and transparent feedback on assessment.

### Together we will:

- Commit to creating an inclusive environment in which we can share our different perspectives, showing mutual respect, in accordance with professional standards and the RCN respect charter.
- Promote open and constructive dialogue, raising concerns appropriately to improve services and experience.
- Work towards sustainability, always considering our environmental impact.
- Promote mutual wellbeing, utilising the RCNs academic and support services.

### Links to the following would be included:

- RCN Royal Charter.
- RCN Principles of Nursing Practice.
- RCN Respect Charter.
- NMC Code of Practice.

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## RCN quality assurance

### Publication

This publication is part of the RCN and RCNi Education, Learning and Development Strategy 2021-2024, and includes underpinning evidence in the development and enhancement of the RCN Quality Assurance Framework.

### Description

One of four publications of the RCN and RCNi Education, Learning and Development Strategy 2021-2024, exploring the participant journey policies.

**Publication date: May 2021 Review date: May 2023**

### The Nine Quality Standards

This publication has met the nine quality standards of the quality framework for RCN professional publications. For more information, or to request further details on how the nine quality standards have been met in relation to this particular professional publication, please contact [publicationsfeedback@rcn.org.uk](mailto:publicationsfeedback@rcn.org.uk)

### Evaluation

The authors would value any feedback you have about this publication. Please contact [publicationsfeedback@rcn.org.uk](mailto:publicationsfeedback@rcn.org.uk) clearly stating which publication you are commenting on.



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