



Royal College of Nursing
Shaping nursing since 1916

Reflecting on active representation

Using evidence from representative activity for
NMC revalidation



The purpose of this document is to enable RCN representatives to use their trade union activity and continuing learning and development as part of their evidence to demonstrate that they meet the revalidation requirements of the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC).

1. What are the requirements for NMC revalidation?

The requirements for NMC revalidation include:

- 450 practice hours, or 900 if revalidating as both a nurse and midwife
- 35 hours of continuing professional development (CPD), including 20 hours of participatory learning
- five pieces of practice-related feedback
- five written reflective accounts
- reflective discussion
- health and character declaration
- professional indemnity arrangements
- confirmation.

This document will address the CPD, practice-related feedback and written reflection aspects of the requirements, which require nurses and midwives to reflect on the role of the Code in their practice and demonstrate that they are 'living' the standards set out within it.

2. Can your activity as an RCN representative demonstrate that you are 'living' the standards set out within the Code?

Not all nursing roles involve direct patient/clinical care and the NMC recognises that.

UK nurses and midwives must act in line with the Code, whether they are providing direct care to individuals, groups or communities or bringing their professional knowledge to bear on nursing and midwifery practice in other roles, such as leadership, education or research.

The phrase 'bringing their professional knowledge to bear on nursing and midwifery practice' is key to understanding how your role as a representative can be used to evidence your practice and continuing professional development for the purpose of NMC revalidation.

So how does your representative knowledge and activity 'bear on nursing and midwifery practice'?

In order to understand and confidently articulate the link between your representative duties and the NMC Code, you should first become familiar with the four themes:

- Prioritise people by actively seeking and reflecting on direct feedback received from patients, service users and others to ensure that you are able to fulfil their needs.
- Practise effectively by reflecting on your professional development with your colleagues, identifying areas for improvement in your practice and undertaking professional development activities.
- Preserve safety by practising within your competency for the minimum number of practice hours, reflecting on feedback, and addressing any gaps in your practice through CPD.
- Promote professionalism and trust by providing feedback and helping other colleagues reflect on their professional development, and being accountable to others for your professional development and revalidation.



You should then take some time to consider how the overarching activity of RCN representatives relates to these themes:

An RCN learning representative promotes the value of learning by offering support to all members to plan and manage their learning, and by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to negotiate and protect learning in the workplace for all staff.

A positive learning culture in the workplace supports nurses and midwives to:

- prioritise people by making sure that continuing learning and development is available across the full workforce and

ensuring equality of access to development

- practise effectively by keeping up to date with new technologies, policies and contemporary/ current health care procedures and practices
- preserve safety by keeping abreast of developments
- promote professionalism and trust by ensuring an open and shared experience of self-improvement and a commitment to lifelong learning.

An RCN safety representative promotes a safe working environment by ensuring members' rights to a safe and healthy workplace are upheld, and by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to recognise and influence the management of risk in the workplace.

A safe and healthy workplace supports nurses and midwives to:

- prioritise people, maintaining safe workplace environments, conditions and cultures

- empower people to report any incidents/issues
- practise effectively, sharing expertise, experience and best practice
- preserve safety by having a good knowledge of policy and legislation and actively participating in inspections, assessments and meetings
- promote professionalism through role modelling, taking part in investigations and escalating issues early.

An RCN steward promotes the value of partnership working by facilitating the fair treatment of RCN members through collective and individual representation, and by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to negotiate and promote good employment practice in the workplace.

Good employment practice in the workplace supports nurses and midwives to:

- prioritise people, making sure terms and conditions are preserved, supporting staff morale and ensuring a safe and sustainable work force

- practise effectively by record keeping, attending data protection training, attending supervision and using communication skills to influence and shape partnership agendas
- preserve safety by ensuring policy and procedures are adhered to in the workplace, and supporting a positive culture in organisations whilst being mindful of personal accountability
- promote professionalism by using positive role modelling of leadership, championing equality and human rights, using evidence-based practice, maintaining up-to-date knowledge and expertise, being open and honest and managing expectations.

Once you are confident of how your role supports the standards set out within the Code, you can start to reflect on your activity and continuing learning and development using the NMC's templates.

3. Writing reflective accounts

One of the NMC requirements is that you record a minimum of five written reflections on the NMC Code in the three-year period since your registration was last reviewed.

Reflection is about you as an individual and your experiences as a trade union representative and a registrant that have led to a new understanding. Reflection is a process that allows you to stop and think about your practice and consciously analyse it. Below are two professional articles that discuss the benefits of reflection and may help you to structure your approach.

Ryley, N & Barton, D, 2015, *A framework to support the revalidation process*, Nursing Management 2015, Vol 21, pp. 16-22.

Hampton, M, *Reflective writing – A basic introduction*, University of Portsmouth.

The NMC has provided a [template](#) that must be used if you are to include the reflection as part of your revalidation evidence. Any reflective account needs to explain what you have learnt from:

- CPD activity – this could also include any continuing learning and development (CL&D) events you have attended

- a piece of practice-related feedback
- an event or experience in your professional practice or in your role as a trade union representative.

You may wish to use a combination of all three of the above in your reflective account.

You will need to fill in a page for each of your reflective accounts, making sure you do not include any information that might identify a specific patient, service user or colleague. You can refer to NMC guidance on preserving anonymity in Guidance Sheet One titled '**NON-IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION**'.

4. Reflection and demonstrating improvement

A key component of any reflective account is articulating how the experience has changed or improved your practice. The NMC asks, 'How did you change or improve your practice as a result?' In relation to your representative role, you might explain how you personally have used the learning to improve your knowledge and skills in your role as an RCN representative.

The practicalities

- Use the NMC [template](#) if you wish your reflection to be included as part of your revalidation requirements.
- Consider how the experience or learning has improved your role as a rep. Articulate how the rep role supports the four themes of the Code.
- The NMC does not require you to routinely submit a copy of the reflective accounts unless requested. However, you should retain these in your portfolio as a record, to help you with your reflective discussion and to show your confirmer.
- Your reflective accounts can be hand-written, typed or if necessary dictated.

An example of a reflective account for an RCN learning rep

What was the nature of the CPD activity/practice-related feedback and/or event or experience in your practice?

Supporting a member in drafting reflective pieces as part of a capability process. Particularly challenging as the member didn't have full insight into the importance of this.

What did you learn from the CPD activity and/or feedback?

I learned that it was necessary to tailor my approach to the particular needs of this member (and other members), being patient and sensitive to the member's individual needs.

The benefit of working collaboratively with RCN colleagues, such as stewards, in supporting members.

Developed my knowledge of learning offers within my organisation and at the university.

Developed my recognition of supporting members from diverse backgrounds to enable equal opportunities.

How did you change or improve your work as a result?

Recognised the value of adopting a flexible approach to supporting members to accommodate their needs.

Utilised facilitation and leadership skills to improve the experience for a member.

How is this relevant to the Code?

Prioritise people – RCN member's needs led the approach taken to support and improve member practice.

Practise effectively – achieved positive outcome for member.

Preserve safety – supported member to improve practice.

Promote professionalism and trust – supported member to recognise the NMC Code of Conduct and her responsibilities.

An example of a reflective account for an RCN safety rep

What was the nature of the CPD activity/practice-related feedback and/or event or experience in your practice?

I received an internal incident report on unsafe staffing on a morning shift.

What did you learn from the CPD activity and/or feedback?

As the H&S rep I investigated the report and reviewed:

- ward nursing establishment
- staff roster for the shift
- sickness rates both at ward and unit level
- number of patients/level of need
- report to safer working group.

How did you change or improve your work as a result?

I raised awareness in the organisation of the importance of safe staffing levels at the joint staff and management committee and this resulted in a new directive to matrons on staffing issues.

How is this relevant to the Code?

Practising safely – ensuring safe staffing levels

An example of a reflective account for an RCN steward

What was the nature of the CPD activity/practice-related feedback and/or event or experience in your practice?

A capability hearing regarding a drug error – I had to gather background information, particularly a Root Cause Analysis of the incident. I had to weigh the evidence from both the member and management and discover the facts of the case. I also reviewed my knowledge of our Medicines Policy and the NMC guidance.

What did you learn from the CPD activity and/or feedback?

I learnt that it is essential to read through all evidence and to be up to date with organisation processes and policies. I used a range of communication skills, including interviewing and counselling, as part of the process.

How did you change or improve your work as a result?

I realised the importance of communication skills in my rep role, to elicit information from the member and others involved in the process, and to manage the expectations of the member. I need to be clear how local policies are applied and how member conduct may compromise this. It is important that this is about a member and not a policy.

How is this relevant to the Code?

Practise effectively – share and learn from Code; reflection done with member.

Promoting professionalism and trust – professionalism when representing and liaising with employers both inside and outside meetings.

An example of a reflective account for all RCN reps

What was the nature of the CPD activity?

An RCN continuing learning and development workshop focusing on developing “questioning and influencing” skills to enable representatives to confidently discuss issues affecting members in the workplace.

What did you learn from the CPD activity?

During the workshop we explored:

- how to access information that might help us to identify any risks or early warning signs
- how we can use that information to engage with employers to address the issues with early interventions.

How did you change or improve your work as a result?

In the past, I have experienced times where we all know that there might be a problem on the horizon, and that this problem might even be serious enough to risk staff or patients. But although we all talk amongst ourselves, and we might even flag it up, we don't seem to have a strong enough voice to make anything happen. This workshop highlighted that we need to be more systematic about collecting evidence and articulating the issues at the right level. When all three types of representatives can work together and bring data, relevant to their area of practice, we create a stronger, more credible, collective voice.

How is this relevant to the Code?

Identifying and addressing potential risks is vital to all four themes, but particularly practising effectively and preserving safety in the workplace.

An example of a reflective account for all RCN reps

What was the nature of the practice-related feedback?

Received a call from RCN mentor to say that a member had been impressed with the support I gave her even though the outcome wasn't very favourable.

What did you learn from the practice-related feedback?

The member was very certain she had just made a mistake and if she apologised things would be okay. I had to discuss the concept of accountability and how her actions contradicted the Code. I studied the Code carefully and used examples from RCN literature to illustrate why accountability was the key issue. I had to draw on my communication skills to deliver this message.

How did you change or improve your work as a result?

It is important to discover what members believe about their actions and the possible consequences. It is important not to assume the member sees things the same way as me. I will now check members' understanding and expectations at the beginning of the process.

How is this relevant to the Code?

Prioritising people – checking individuals' understanding of their situation.

Promoting professionalism and trust – checking expectations.

These are all examples of how you can bring your professional knowledge to bear on nursing and midwifery practice and therefore use your trade union activity to contribute to your NMC revalidation.



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February 2016

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Published by the Royal College of Nursing
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London
W1G 0RN

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Publication code 005 478