

Principles for Clinical Practice by Teaching Specialists (Clinical/Practitioner)

This paper explores the current methods by which Teaching Specialists Clinical/Practitioners, C/P in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS) maintain and extend their discipline-specific practice. Following an audit of current Teaching Specialists (C/P) within CNHS, a set of principles is proposed to lead discussions with staff on their workload and methods by which to maintain and extend their discipline-specific expertise and practice that aligns with the strategic direction of the CNHS.

Background

The Teaching Specialist (C/P) position provides an academic career pathway for staff whose responsibilities predominantly encompass teaching and teaching-related activities, in areas including (but not limited to) health, allied health or other professional or creative arts programs. Staff bring recent, ongoing (concurrent) or extensive experience and knowledge of contemporary discipline specific practice to the position are expected to maintain this.

It is important that the CNHS supports our staff in this endeavour to ensure that they meet the inherent requirements of the position, but most importantly that our staff maintain their clinical or discipline specific currency and credibility. Through maintaining clinical/professional currency and credibility, CNHS hopes to enable a pathway for promotion as Teaching Specialists (C/P) develop and extend their professional standing. There are a wide variety of ways in which this is achieved including: reading literature, maintaining clinical links, working in clinical practice, liaising with clinicians and participating in research, writing for publication, and attending CPD.¹ *However, in the CNHS, there is an expectation that staff maintain and develop their clinical practice (be that clinical or discipline specific) through direct involvement in a relevant clinical or professional environment.* This speaks to clinical/professional currency where the expectation is that staff have direct hands-on involvement, develop clinical/professional links and visibility with role development and transferability of skills.¹

In the CNHS, the definition of clinical/professional practice has been adapted from that found in many AHPRA registered professions' definition.³ That is, clinical/professional practice includes direct clinical care but can also include professional knowledge when working in a direct non-clinical relationship with clients, such as working in management, administration, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, or any other roles that impact on the safe, effective delivery of services in the profession.

The [Teaching Specialist \(Clinical/Practitioner\) Academic Profile](#) outlines the requirements of the position at different academic levels (A to E).

Principles

The CNHS seeks to support our Teaching Specialists (C/P) staff to gain exposure to contemporary cutting-edge practice to maintain their discipline specific 'clinical' currency, to develop and extend networks with clinical facilities and to be viewed as experts in their field. In this sense, there is a requirement that staff will undertake direct discipline specific practice or observation. The following set of principles govern the activity that staff can conduct with two main methods by which staff will be supported to maintain and develop their clinical expertise.

1. Support for professional practice with Flinders FTE

Full time staff will be supported to gain hands on experience in the specialty area of practice through observation, paid or unpaid work for a maximum of half a day a fortnight, or the equivalent, if taken in blocks of time. This is equivalent to a total of 13 days a year or 97.5 hours (1.7 WAUs). In this situation, the workload associated with maintaining clinical currency would be included within the 3 WAU for standard activity within Service and Leadership. This is also applicable to part time staff (pro-rated), who due to personal reasons (e.g., carer responsibilities), may not be able to undertake external work in their non-Flinders time. If the staff member undertakes paid work (e.g., through a Local Health Network or private practice), then the CNHS would invoice the facility for the salary, if appropriate. To ensure that staff are covered from a legal and insurance perspective, an over-arching agreement would need to be in place with each clinical facility.

Clinical supervision and facilitation, as well as teaching in simulation or pre-clinical teaching, can be counted towards maintenance of clinical currency but should not be the sole mechanism. That is, there is an expectation that staff will complete some direct hands-on clinical/professional practice (less than 97.5 hours). The amount would be determined through discussions with their supervisor.

If staff wish to maintain their clinical practice within their workload through the provision of clinical services within their Flinders time that is greater than 0.05 FTE, then revenue from this service must return to CNHS. Revenue return could also include student placements or other return on investment such as access for teaching scholarship projects or research partnerships. As the work to maintain discipline specific expertise in this situation will be undertaken within the Service and Leadership workload (maximum 3 WAU for full time staff), this work cannot therefore exceed more than one day a fortnight.

However, approval for greater than 0.05 FTE clinical practice within workload can be sought from the Dean (People and Resources). In determining approval, the Dean (People and Resources) will consider the following:

- *Service provides a student clinical learning opportunity (that counts as clinical hours) and/or*
- *Service provides direct benefit from a research perspective and/or*
- *Service maintains a service during student absence and/or*
- *Service provides a significant revenue for the College and/or*
- *Service aligns closely with the CNHS Strategic Plan and/or*
- *Registration, accreditation or ongoing endorsement requirements.*

2. Support for professional practice external to Flinders FTE

Part time staff who are able to work professionally in their non-Flinders time, will be supported to continue their external clinical work through appropriate allocation of workload. That is, when allocating teaching and Topic Coordination activities, academic staff will need to ensure that teaching workload and timetabling occurs on the appropriate Flinders workdays. In addition, where possible, discussion with relevant facilities will be had to evaluate the potential for joint positions and partnerships.

Staff who are supported to maintain their discipline specific currency will be expected to share their expertise through activities such as contribution to development of curriculum, collaboration with placement providers and assistance with accreditation.

References

1. Fisher MT (2005): Exploring how nurse lecturers maintain clinical credibility. *Nurse Education in Practice*, Volume 5, Issue 1, 21-29.
2. NMBA (2016): Registration standard: continuing professional development www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/Continuing-professional-development.aspx Accessed 3.12.2020
3. Flinders University Teaching Specialist (Clinical/Practitioner) Academic Profile: <https://staff.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/staff/pc/academic-profile-for-teaching-specialist-clinical-practitioner.pdf>