

Quality Assurance of Pre-registration Tutors

2017-18

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1 Introduction

As one of the 9 UK healthcare regulators, we are tasked with maintaining patient safety, upholding the reputation of the pharmacy profession and maintaining professional standards. The pre-registration training year is a key element to ensuring that we register competent pharmacists; thereby protecting the public and maintaining the reputation of the pharmacy profession in Northern Ireland.

We quality assure pre-registration training in Northern Ireland and a core element includes using trainee feedback about the performance of tutors.

What happens during pre-registration training?

Pharmacy graduates who wish to register as a pharmacist with the Pharmaceutical Society NI must successfully complete a year of pre-registration training which takes place mainly in the community pharmacy and / or hospital pharmacy sectors under the supervision of an accredited tutor pharmacist. For 2017-18, 169 trainees underwent pre-registration and 210 tutors provided trainee supervision. During this time, trainees are expected to apply their knowledge and skills gained at University, demonstrate that they are competent by achieving performance standards through completion of a reflective online e-portfolio, successfully complete mandatory eLearning modules and attend compulsory training days, achieve a pass the registration examination and obtain a final declaration from their tutor that they are fit to practice and possess the necessary professional skills to operate as a registered pharmacist.

What do tutors do?

Tutors have multiple roles and responsibilities. They are expected to provide training, deliver constructive feedback to trainees about performance in practice, conduct assessments objectively and act as a mentor to their trainees. An important part of the role is making final the declaration that their trainee is fit for practice and evidence for this is gathered throughout the year with tutor verification that their trainee is developing the required competencies via a reflective online-portfolio.

Other key responsibilities include helping the trainee to develop the necessary professional skills so that they have the right attitude expected of healthcare professionals, have good communication skills, can work with others and can demonstrate leadership. Tutors are also responsible for ensuring that the requirements for pre-registration training as defined in the Standards for pre-registration training are met¹.

Other key roles include:

- identify training needs and help trainees plan training
- encourage trainees to reflect on their own performance

¹ <http://www.psnl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/PRE-REGISTRATION-STANDARDS.pdf>

- work with their trainee to set objectives and to provide training to enable the trainee to meet the performance standards programme
- provide timely and constructive feedback on performance
- conduct assessments objectively
- welcome feedback from their trainee to help and identify their own learning needs in relation to being a tutor
- listen and respect the views of their trainee
- act as a role model

What experience does a pharmacist need to become a tutor?

To become a pre-registration tutor, a pharmacist must be registered for at least 3 years in the sector of pharmacy in which they wish to provide tutoring. To become accredited as a tutor, they must attend a tutor training course and pass a subsequent assessment. Experienced tutors must attend a re-accreditation course every 5 years.

Why do we request trainee feedback on tutor performance?

Within this framework, trainee feedback forms part of the quality assurance arrangements that we undertake to encourage best practise, identify important issues and improve the quality of training for pre-registration trainees. The role of the tutor is crucial in the delivery of pre-registration and therefore, the Pharmaceutical Society NI is required to ensure that tutors remain fit for purpose and can effectively undertake the important role of being a tutor.

What is new?

The Council of the Pharmacy Society NI set out objectives for education in the Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 and in objective 4a. aims to ensure that pharmacy education and professional development is fit for purpose². And, as part of the review and development of pre-registration training, several new components for pre-registration training were recently introduced.

Firstly, a 'learning contract' (appendix 1) was introduced as part of the application process to join the pre-registration programme. This requires a signed agreement between the tutor and trainee to commit to the providing and receiving of training. The purpose of the learning contract is to ensure that the culture is right during training and to clarify exactly what is expected from both parties in terms of behaviours and responsibilities.

Secondly, tutor accreditation training events were re-designed to provide increased focus on equipping tutors with the essential skills to operate as a tutor by exploring models of effective leadership, how to give effective feedback, how to coach effectively, how to deal

² <http://www.psn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Corporate-Strategy-2017-22-Final-Version-.pdf>

with difficult situations with emphasis on the importance of tutors fulfilling their commitments as defined in the learning contract.

Thirdly, new quality control measures were introduced that enabled active monitoring of trainee progress via the online reflective e-portfolio but also active monitoring of tutor performance in validating evidence of trainee competency.

Finally, we carried out a review of the current trainee feedback process and identified several issues related to its effectiveness and engagement from both parties. As a result, a new approach to the feedback process was developed with the aim of addressing these issues.

What's involved in the new approach to trainee feedback on tutor performance?

The new feedback process asks trainees to reflect on what went well, what went less well and to provide their ideas about what their tutor could aim to do differently with future trainees. This feedback is subsequently shared with tutors to provide them with an opportunity to clearly identify what went well and should be continued and to encourage reflection about what they could aim to do differently with future trainees.

Trainees are asked to rate the performance of their tutor in the following four domains (12 questions in total) ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (appendix 2):

1. Being a trainer and a coach
2. Providing feedback
3. Being an assessor
4. Providing support

Feedback from trainees is collated by the pre-registration team and subsequently individualised performance reports are sent to the respective tutors for review. They are asked to use their professional judgment when reflecting on trainee feedback and approach this quality assurance work with a desire to deliver personal development and improve pre-registration training where possible.

However, in the event, that there is significant unsatisfactory feedback about tutor performance, tutors are asked to submit a tutor development plan for review by the pre-registration team (appendix 3). Pre-registration team will also consider evidence of tutor performance linked to the additional quality control monitoring tools and other quality assurance measures when making a request to a tutor to submit a development plan. Support to tutors in this instance, will be provided with support in order to make necessary improvements. If significant unsatisfactory feedback continues to be received without evidence of the tutor making improvements in performance, then continued accreditation to act as a tutor may be removed.

This is in line with the standards or pre-registration registration which allow for the removal of accreditation to act as tutor, if there is significant unsatisfactory feedback and evidence of poor performance over a period of three years.

2 Method

An online feedback questionnaire (appendix 2) was distributed to all trainees via email.

The survey contained qualitative questions and a 5-point Likert rating scale was used (strongly agree to strongly disagree). After each question, trainees were invited to leave an open-ended free text response. To analyse responses to these questions, thematic analysis was used and were summarised where there was only a small number of trainees leaving a response.

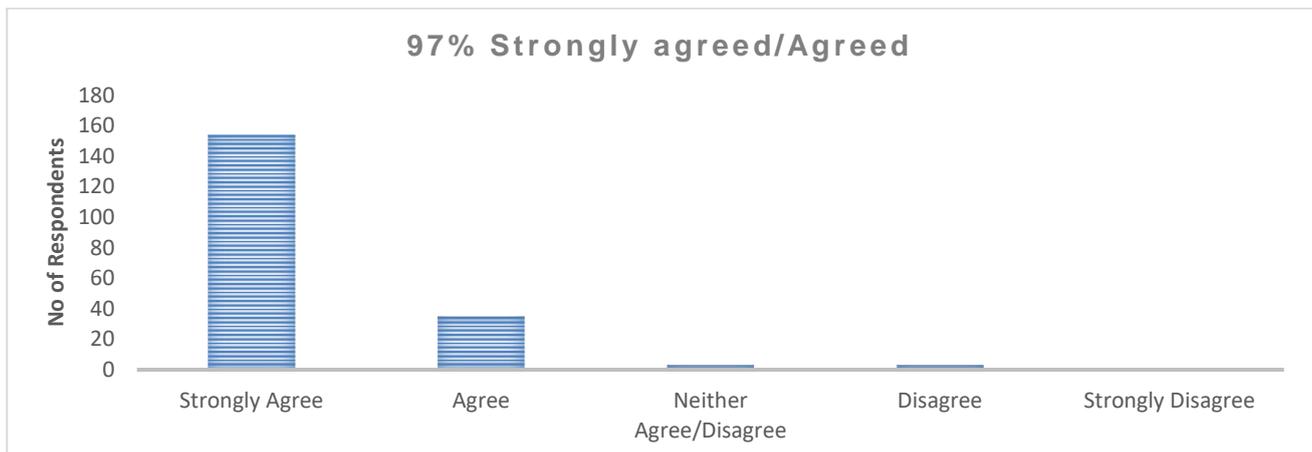
Trainees who were in co-tutoring arrangements or who may have had more than one tutor during their training are asked to complete a feedback questionnaire on the performance of each tutor. In the 2017-18 training year, there were a total of 169 trainees and with maximum possible return of feedback on 215 tutors.

3 Results

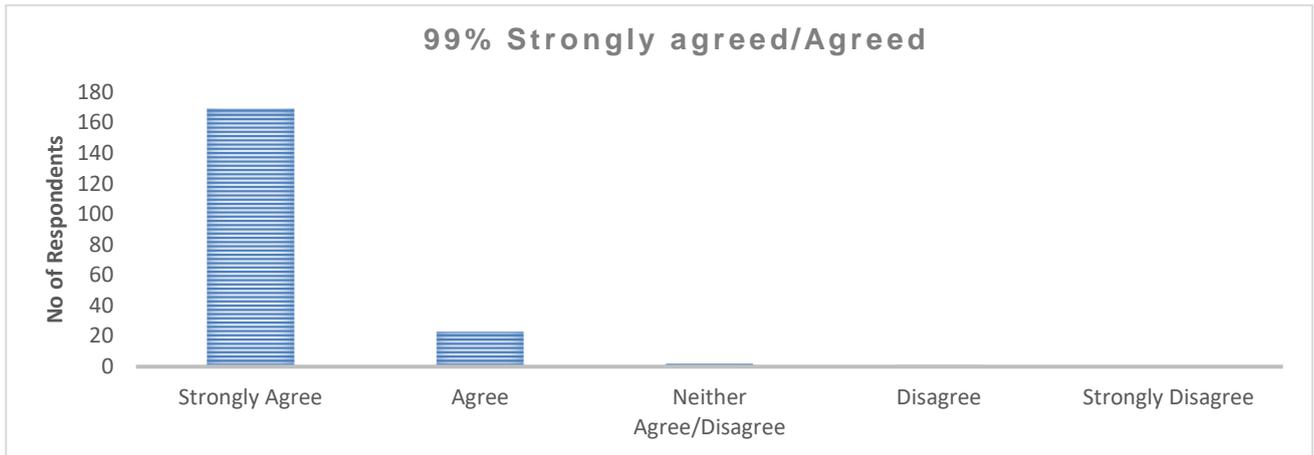
A total of 195 (91%) questionnaires were returned.

Section A - Being a trainer and a coach

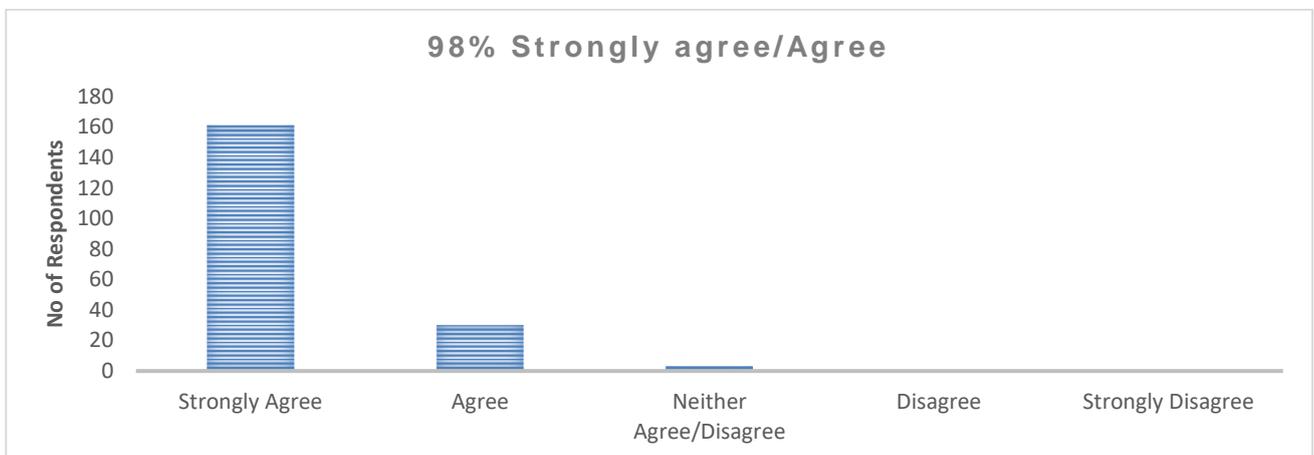
Q1 My tutor worked with me to set objectives and plan training



Q2 My tutor empowered me to take responsibility for my own learning

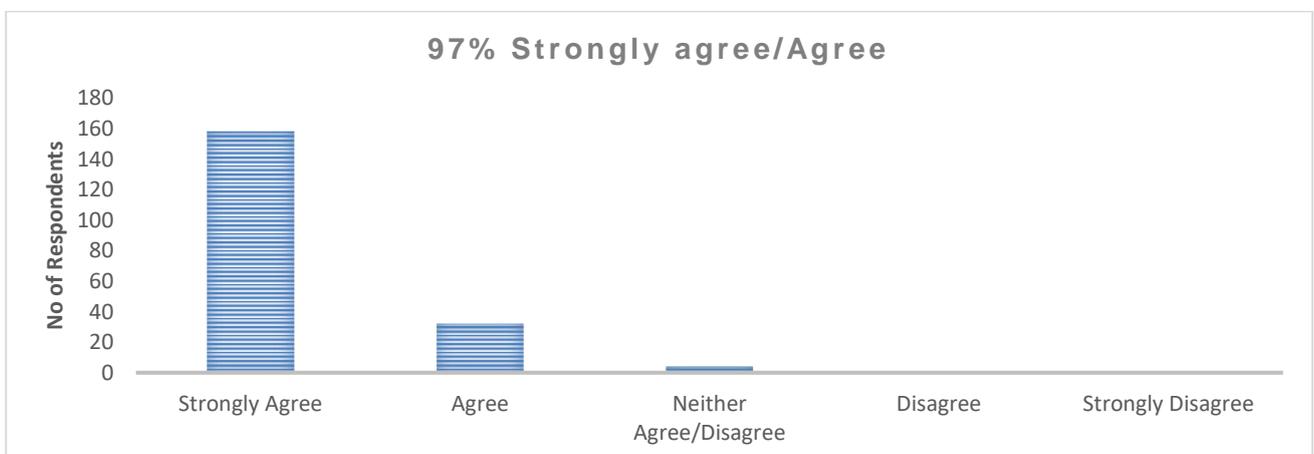


Q3 My tutor encouraged me to reflect on my own performance

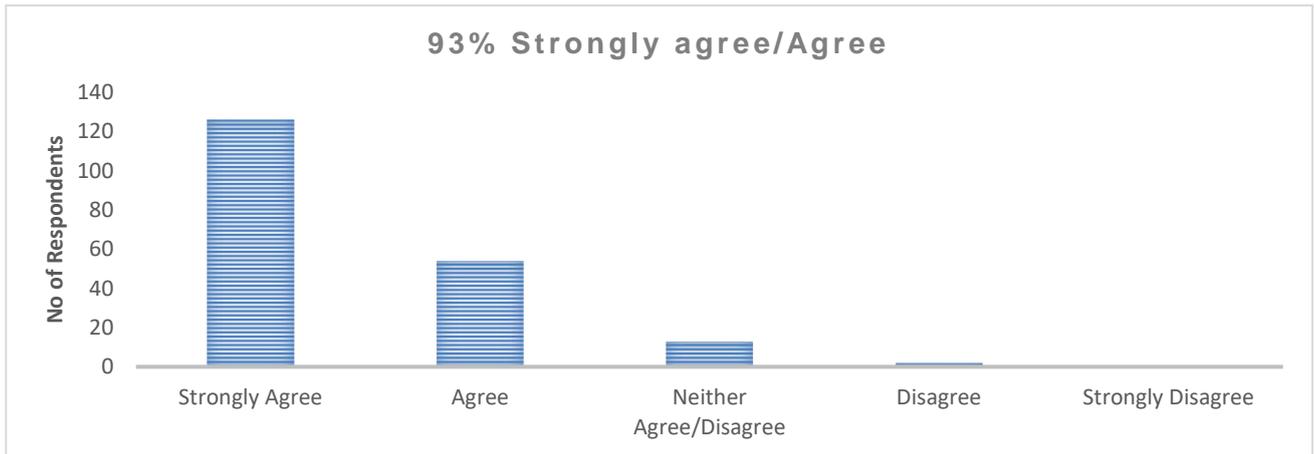


Section B - Providing feedback

Q4 My tutor provided constructive and timely feedback to help me develop

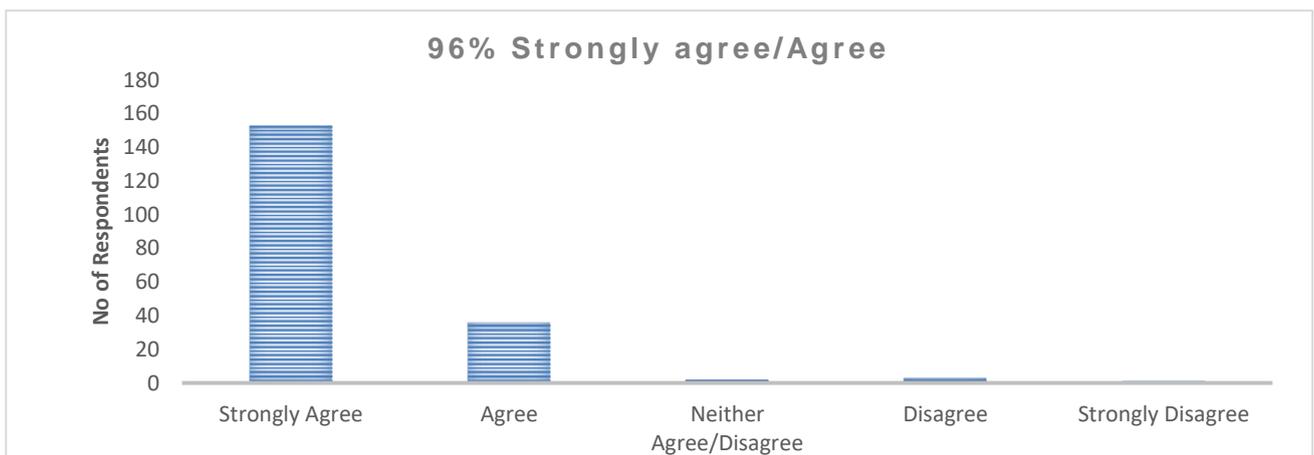


Q5 My tutor used feedback from me to reflect on their own performance as a tutor

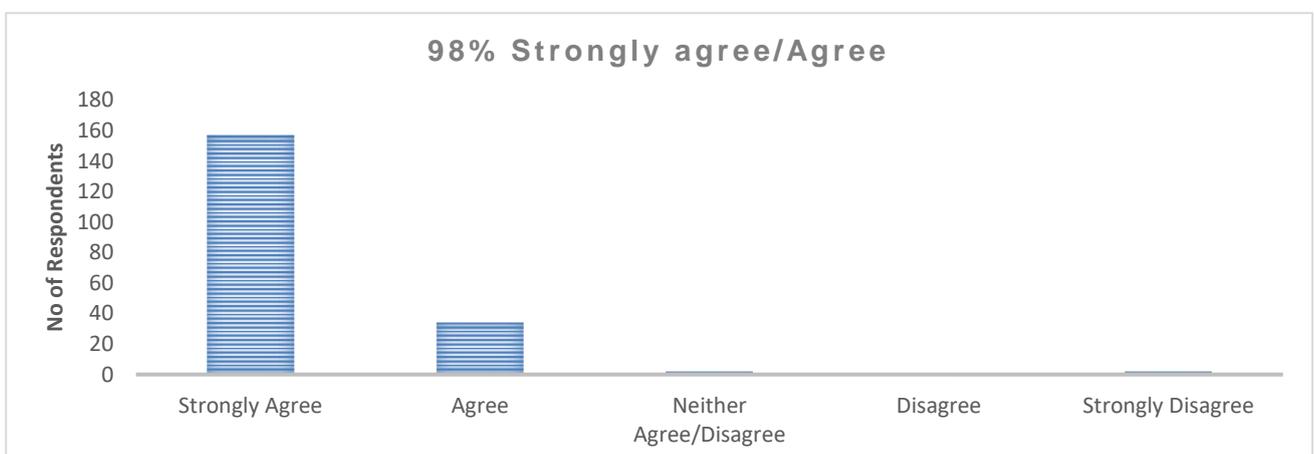


Section C - Being an assessor

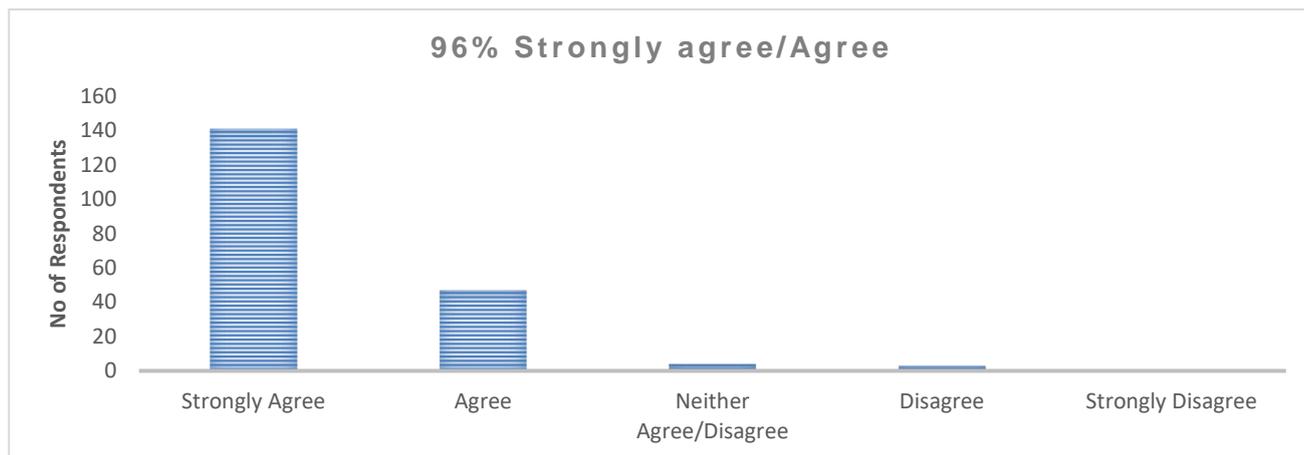
Q6 My tutor carried out timely verification of learning cycles



Q7 My tutor conducted appraisals in an appropriate and timely manner

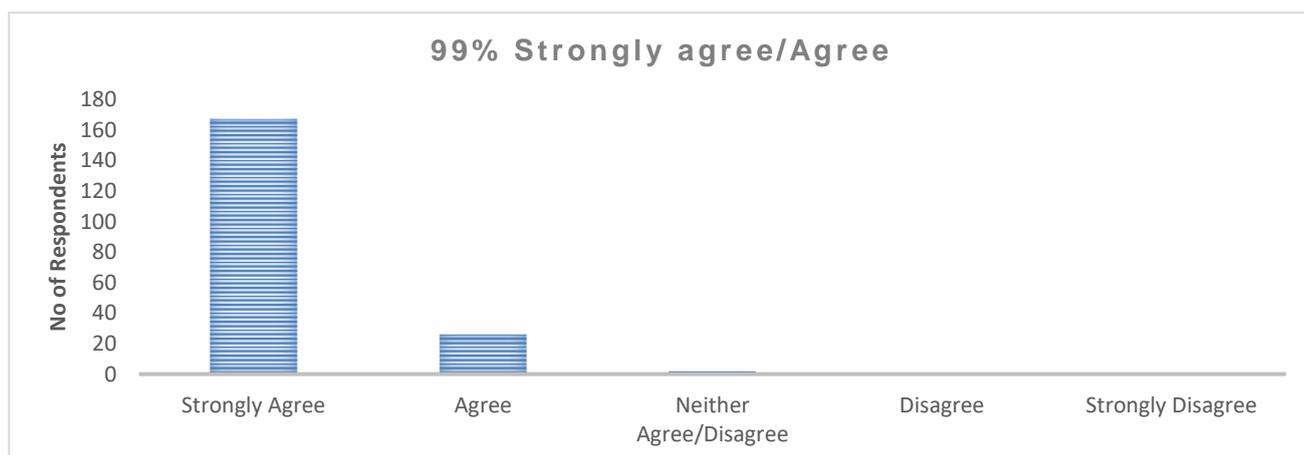


Q8 My tutor set aside time to review my progress regularly

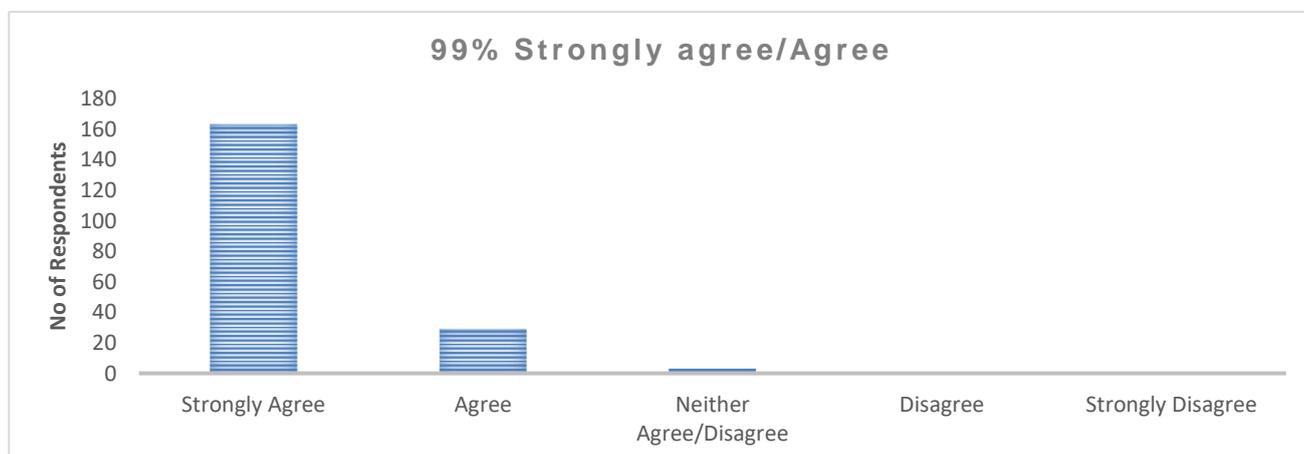


Section D – Providing support

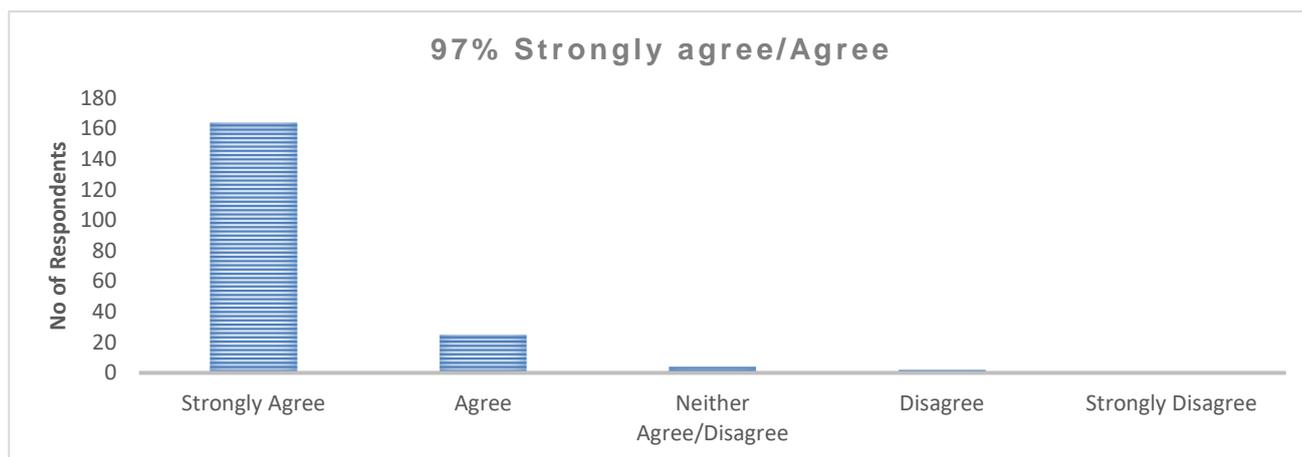
Q9 I was able to approach my tutor if I needed any support or had concerns during training



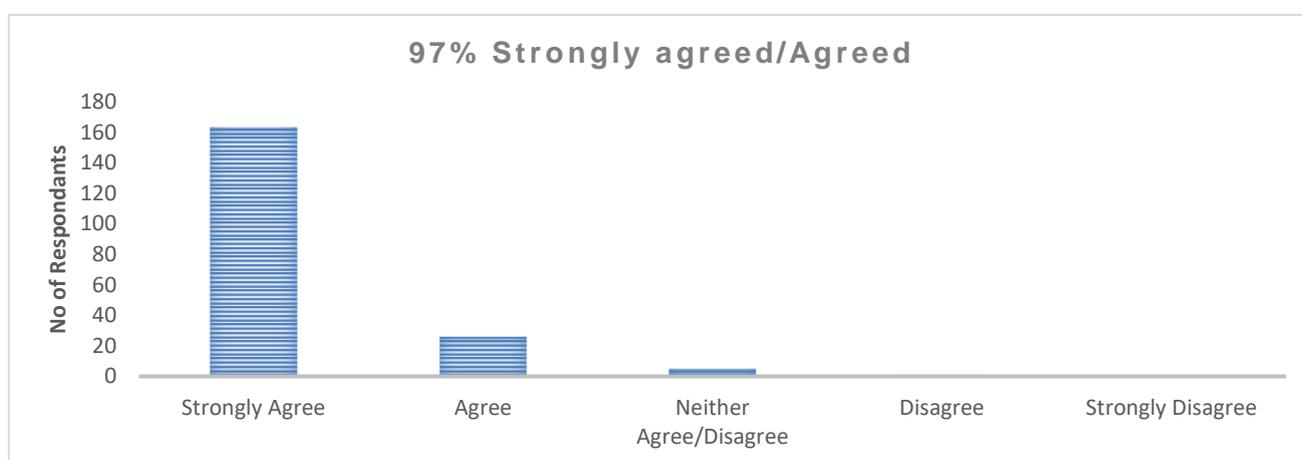
Q10 My tutor provided me with opportunities to demonstrate my competence and achieve the Performance Standards



Q11 My tutor respected my views and opinions



Q12 My tutor supported me to help me achieve my full potential



4 Discussion

The results of the quality assurance work carried out for 2017/8, shows high levels of satisfaction about tutor performance across the four domains and indicate that tutors during the training year provided effective support to trainees to become competent pharmacists.

Further discussion about the results about tutor performance from each of the 4 domains (being a trainer and a coach, providing feedback, being an assessor, providing support) is detailed further below.

Section A results (Being a Trainer and a coach):

The results indicate that 97% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor worked with them to set objectives (Q1). 99% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor empowered them to take responsibility for their learning (Q2). 98% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor encouraged them to reflect on their own performance (Q3). This is a positive result as it indicates that trainees are being encouraged by their

tutors to develop professional practices expected of registrant pharmacists in terms of annual CPD requirements where registrants are expected to reflect on their own performance and take responsibility for identifying learning needs.

Section B results (Proving feedback):

Receiving effective and timely feedback from tutors is a crucial component in helping trainees develop the necessary competencies. The revised tutor accreditation training days focus particularly on how tutors can deliver effective feedback to help their trainees develop. In addition to providing effective feedback, the learning contract defines the behaviours of tutors in actively seeking feedback from their trainee with the expectation that it will be used by tutors to reflect and develop their own performance.

The results are positive and indicate that 97% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor provided constructive and timely feedback to help development (Q4). In Q5, trainees were asked if they felt that their tutor used the feedback provided by them during the training year to reflect on their own performance and 93% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed with this. This result essentially reflects the positive impact of introducing a learning contract the purpose of which was to set expectations in relation to the culture of feedback between the trainee and tutor and to define the behaviours about giving and receiving feedback between both parties in training.

However, (7%) neither agreed/ disagreed or disagreed that that their tutors used the feedback in this way and it is possible that the introduction of a learning contract has meant a change in the culture of giving and receiving feedback for some tutors. Indeed, the culture of seeking feedback from others and subsequently sharing how this feedback has resulted in a tangible change in terms of what the trainee experience will be largely determined by whether there is strong culture of feedback within the organisations providing training. It is also entirely possible that trainees may have shared feedback with their tutor during the year, the tutor has subsequently embraced that feedback but has not undertaken the final simple step of sharing with their trainee, how that feedback has brought about a change.

To address this, future tutor training courses will continue to explore various models for providing effective feedback and to set expectations with tutors about seeking feedback from trainees and ultimately, ensuring that tutors understand the importance of sharing with trainees what change has been introduced as a result of the initial feedback. The learning contract could be adapted to ensure that tutors not only commit to seeking feedback from their trainees but will agree to share with their trainee, how their feedback is being used to effect change.

Section C results (Being an assessor):

The results indicate that 96% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor carried out timely verification of learning cycles (Q6) and that 98% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor conducted appraisals in an appropriate and timely manner (Q7).

96% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor set aside time to review my progress regularly (Q8).

In Q6, A small number of trainees (4%) neither agreed / neither disagreed or disagreed that their tutors carried out timely verifications.

Trainees use the reflective e-portfolio system to submit evidence of their developing competency by submitting learning cycles to their tutor for verification. Trainees are deemed to have met the various competencies when their tutor provides the necessary verifications that their trainee's learning cycles are acceptable.

The additional quality control systems that are now in place have a dual function. They allow for active monitoring of the extent of trainee progress but importantly also enable active monitoring of the extent of tutor verification. For 2017/18, the active monitoring programme meant that the pre-registration team were able to identify a small number of situations where either trainee progress or tutor verifications were behind expectations and explore why progress was behind and provide advice on overcoming barriers. In some instances, progress was behind not because tutor trainees had not submitted a number of learning cycles and therefore their respective tutors were not able to provide timely verification; on other occasions it was due to a small number of tutors who were behind with expected levels of verification. However, in every one of the identified situations, the matters were actively resolved by early intervention from the pre-registration team. The end result of this was that 100% of reflective e-portfolios were completed by the deadline of week 50 along with all the necessary verifications from by tutors in line with requirements.

For 2018/19, clear expectations in relation to tutor verification of e-portfolios have been sent to tutors via email, through regular newsletter updates and will also be form part of training for the revised tutor training days. This active monitoring and quality control of timely verification of portfolios by the pre-registration team will continue for 2018/19. The results to date for 2018/19 indicate that the majority of tutors are fulfilling expectations.

Given the importance of timeliness in providing verifications, tutor performance in this area will be closely monitored year on year.

Section D results (providing support): The results are positive and indicate that 99% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to approach their tutor if they needed any support or had any concerns (Q9). 99% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor provided opportunities for them to demonstrate competence and achieve the performance standards (Q10). 97% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor respected their view and opinions (Q11) and 97% of trainees strongly agreed or agreed that their tutor supported them to help them achieve full potential (Q12).

The following discussion provides a thematic analysis of the additional feedback from trainees about tutor performance.

Themes from the additional feedback from trainees:

Common themes from trainee's additional feedback indicated that they valued the opportunities and activities provided to them by tutors that this enabled them to apply their learning from university to practice and that developmental feedback from their tutors empowered them to take responsibility for learning and improved their confidence. A frequent commentary from trainees indicated that input from their tutor encouraged them to self-reflect and that this enabled them to become reflective practitioners. Trainees made reference to feeling supported by their tutors especially when requiring assistance or needing help managing problems.

A small number of trainees indicated that getting protected study time each week was difficult especially in busy practice settings. The standards for pre-registration indicate that trainees should be getting 4 hours protect development time each week and that tutors and trainees are encouraged to mutually agree how protected development time will be managed each week.

To address this, further communications via newsletters updates and tutor training will be carried out in terms of increasing awareness with all parties about the requirement for trainees to receive protected development time each week each.

5 Conclusion:

The new approach to quality assuring tutor performance using trainee feedback resulted in a high response rate (91%).

The results provide evidence that tutors are fulfilling their commitments that they make to trainees during training as defined by the learning contract. Trainees express high levels of satisfaction about tutor performance within the four domains of tutor performance:

1. Being a trainer and a coach
2. Providing feedback
3. Being an assessor
4. Providing support

Notwithstanding the results of this quality assurance work, it is important acknowledge that acting as a tutor for a trainee is difficult and can bring significant challenges in certain situations. The progress and performance of trainees varies during training with some trainees taking longer to adapt to the pressures of pharmacy practice and or indeed dealing with work-based training. Some trainees require intense input from their tutors and need additional remediation to keep them on their trajectory to safe practice and to achieve the required levels of professionalism expected of registered pharmacists. Therefore, single isolated subjective negative feedback about one aspect of tutor performance from a trainee

in any one year, has to be taken in context with other evidence about performance and does not necessarily mean that the tutor is not an effective tutor.

Within this context, and within the remit of the standards for pre-registration training, ongoing monitoring of trainee feedback from trainees about tutor performance and decisions about continuing accreditation to act as a tutor, will be based on ongoing year to year review of performance and on evidence gathered from other aspects of tutor performance during training including other quality assurance measures. The standards for pre-registration registration allow for the removal of accreditation to act as tutor, if there is significant unsatisfactory feedback and evidence of poor performance over a period of three years. For 2017-18, A small number of tutors, although receiving positive feedback for across all other aspects of tutor performance, received one off isolated negative feedback about certain aspects of performance. This is currently being actively managed to ensure necessary improvements are being made for 2018-19. For 2017-18, no tutors received negative feedback across all 12 of the feedback statements within the four domains. No tutors had their accreditation to act as a tutor removed.

In conclusion, this new approach to quality assuring tutor performance provides tutors with an opportunity to clearly identify what went well during training and reflect on what could be done differently with future trainees. From the viewpoint of quality assuring pre-registration training, it enables ongoing monitoring of tutor performance in key tutor activities, helps ensure that tutors remain fit for purpose, encourages best practice from tutors and helps the pre-registration team identify important issues in training whilst ensuring that the culture is right around pre-registration training.

In line with the Council of the Pharmacy Society NI Corporate Strategy (2017-22), Objective 4.a to ensure that pharmacy education is fit for purpose, the introduction of a learning contract, revised format tutor training courses, quality control measures to monitor tutor verification of trainee progress and introduction of a new trainee feedback process fulfils part of the ongoing work to review and develop pre-registration training.

Appendix 1

LEARNING CONTRACT

This section of the application form is an agreement between the pre-registration tutor and trainee. It clarifies what is expected during pre-registration training. It should be discussed and signed by both parties and is part of your application to enter pre-registration training. You should both keep a copy of this contract. A learning contract is not a contract of employment, but an agreement by both parties to commit to the providing and receiving of training.

Part One – Tutor’s undertaking

I, (insert your name) make the following commitments to you,

(insert trainee’s name) for the duration of your preregistration training with me.

I will

- Provide and arrange training that will enable you to develop all the skills, attitudes and knowledge defined by the Performance Standards
- Work with you to identify your individual learning needs
- Will follow Pharmaceutical Society NI pre-registration scheme requirements, as explained in the standards for pre-registration training and in the tutor manual
- Treat you in a manner that is conducive to your learning. This will include:
 - Giving you the opportunity to contribute and put forward your views
 - Providing you with appropriate time to study and reflect on your learning (by mutual agreement)
 - Being approachable and providing help when asked or referring you to a more appropriate source of help
 - Setting targets for you through a process of negotiation with you
 - Explaining and repeating explanations as necessary
 - Challenging and questioning you to check your understanding
 - Encouraging and supporting you when you find situations challenging
 - Adapting plans as appropriate
- Enable you to have access to off-job study days and training events, as appropriate
- Inform, support and confer with others involved in your training
- Set aside time to review your progress regularly, both informally and formally
- Provide you with constructive and honest feedback to aid your development
- Provide feedback on your progress to the Pharmaceutical Society NI at the set times and in the required manner
- Assess you objectively in all the Performance Standards specified by the Pharmaceutical Society NI based on a range of evidence which you provide to me and taking account of feedback from other people involved in your training
- Identify and address my own learning needs in relation to being a tutor
- Welcome feedback from you to help me develop my tutoring skills
- Lead by example

SIGNATURE OF TUTOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF TRAINEE:

DATE:

(Trainee undertaking overleaf)

LEARNING CONTRACT (Continued)

Part Two – Trainee's undertaking

I, (insert your name) make the following commitments for the duration of my pre-registration training while being tutored by (insert tutor's name).

I will

- Adhere to the rules and regulations of the Pharmaceutical Society NI and the organisation I am working for
- Acquaint myself with the learning outcomes required by the Pharmaceutical Society NI to register i.e. the Performance Standards and the registration Examination Syllabus
- Take responsibility for my own learning and development by:
 - Participating fully in the development of my learning plans
 - Being pro-active in seeking learning opportunities, in work activities or whilst at training events or study days
 - Using a pro-active approach to solve problems and seek answers, using all resources available
 - Developing a portfolio of evidence for all the Performance Standards
 - Reflecting on my learning and experience
 - Identifying my further learning needs and developing targets for myself
 - Using the time you or other trainers spend with me to best advantage
 - Keeping to agreed deadlines
- Respect and be prepared to learn from colleagues at all levels
- Be a reliable and trustworthy member of your pharmacy team
- Endeavour to contribute to the overall goals and work targets of the pharmacy team
- Admit to not knowing, understanding or being comfortable if that is the case
- Receive feedback and use it to help me to develop further
- Provide constructive feedback to you, where this may help you to develop your skills as a tutor

SIGNATURE OF TRAINEE:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF TUTOR:

DATE:

Trainee Survey on Tutor Performance

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland must ensure that pre-registration tutors can effectively undertake the role of tutor.

Please complete this questionnaire in relation to the performance of your tutor.

Each tutor will receive an individualised report from the Pharmaceutical Society.

Being a Trainer and a coach

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. My tutor worked with me to set objectives and plan training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. My tutor empowered me to take responsibility for my own learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. My tutor encouraged me to reflect on my own performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Providing feedback

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. My tutor provided constructive and timely feedback to help me develop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. My tutor used feedback from me to reflect on their own performance as a tutor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Being an assessor

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. My tutor carried out timely verification of learning cycles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. My tutor conducted appraisals in an appropriate and timely manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. My tutor set aside time to review my progress regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Support

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. I was able to approach my tutor if I needed any support or had concerns during training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. My tutor provided me with opportunities to demonstrate my competence and achieve the Performance Standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. My tutor respected my views and opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. My tutor supported me to help me achieve my full potential	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Review of your tutor experience as trainee

Having reviewed the performance of your tutor, please reflect on your experience of undertaking training with your tutor:

What went well?

What did not go so well?

What could your tutor aim to do differently with future trainees?

Appendix 3:

Tutor Development Plan

Having reviewed feedback from your trainee, please reflect on the following:

What went well?

What did not go so well?

What could I do differently with future trainees?

What development needs have you identified?