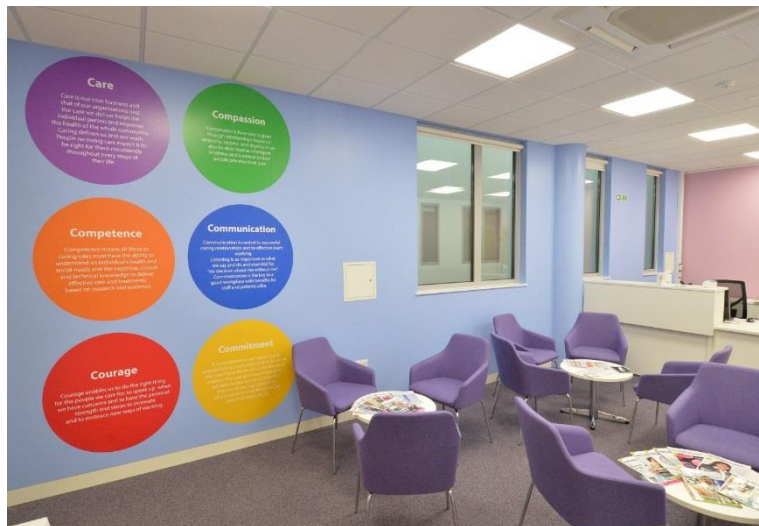




Candidate Information Booklet  
for the NMC's Nursing Associate  
Overseas Test of Competence  
Part 2: The University of Northampton



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## Before the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

### 01. Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) introduced a Test of Competence for internationally registered nursing associates in January 2019. The Test of Competence will measure candidates against the current [NMC Standards of proficiency for nursing associates \(2018\)](#).

Nursing associate in the UK is a new profession which sits alongside the discipline of nursing. Nursing associates work to provide care for people of all ages in a range of settings as well as playing an important role in supporting the registered nurse in all of their distinct fields of practice which include:

- Adult nursing
- Children's nursing
- Learning disabilities nursing
- Mental health nursing

The Test of Competence is specific to nursing associates and consists of two parts. This handbook provides information about Part 2 of the Test of Competence. Test blueprints are available on the University of Northampton and the NMC's websites with links to other online resources which will help candidates prepare for the Test of Competence.

In order to quality assure in the UK, it is necessary to share data, including paperwork and videos associated with a candidate's exam, for the purposes of moderation. This is done securely. By submitting your application, you are confirming that you have read and understood this information.

General information about preparing for the OSCE is available at the [NMC website](#).

More detailed information is available after paying for the OSCE.

### 02. What is the UK like?

The UK is made up of four distinct countries, each with its own laws, culture and customs. A useful user-friendly website which provides some basic and interesting information about the UK is available at <http://projectbritain.com>.

The UK may be very different from the last country you practiced in and you should spend time finding out about the population, health and social care and other aspects of life. Much of this information is collected as data and available from the Office of National Statistics website: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>.

### **Some interesting social facts about the UK:**

Approximately half of all children are born outside of marriage and there are a large number of lone parents. Same sex couples have civil partnership and equal marriage and many have children. All people must be treated equally and not subject to discrimination based on disability, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Information on the Equality Act 2010 can be found [here](#).

Divorce, homosexuality and abortion are all legal in the UK. It is common for women and men to drink alcohol and smoke tobacco socially, although smoking is now banned in all enclosed public spaces such as bars and workplaces. The UK is a multi-cultural, multi-faith society and all patients must have their faith or lack of faith, culture and human rights respected by all health care professionals. Further information can be found [here](#).

### **03. Becoming familiar with nursing associate practice in the UK**

You must familiarise yourself with the [ethical and professional standards](#) expected of registered nursing associates in the UK. These are the required standards which underpin professional nursing associate practice.

All healthcare professionals must work in partnership with patients, obtaining their consent and respecting their dignity and privacy. It is unacceptable for your words or actions to imply or express disapproval of any patients' lifestyle. You must not discriminate in any way against those in your care. Patients and the public expect high standards of professional practice from nursing associates.

Health care professionals work in partnership and registered nursing associates are expected to contribute to the multi-disciplinary team in their area of practice. Many organisations are recruiting nursing associates using the [six C's of Care, Compassion, Competence, Communication, Courage and Commitment](#) and you should be familiar with these and be able to demonstrate them in the OSCE.

### **04. Applying for Part 2 (the OSCE)**

Part 2 is a nursing associate Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) – a practical nursing associate examination. The OSCE can only be sat after successfully passing Part 1 and only the NMC can authorise a candidate to take Part 2 (the OSCE).

Once you have received confirmation from the NMC of a successful pass in Part 1, you will be directed to the University of Northampton's Test Centre webpage to begin the application process for Part 2.

We ask that candidates with a disability requiring any reasonable adjustments notify the Test Centre separately after booking their OSCE by emailing [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk).

Candidates with learning needs may be entitled to extra time in the stations. Evidence **must** be provided from professional reports at time of booking to verify the learning needs adjustments prior to undertaking the exam.

The Additional Student Support & Inclusion Services Team (ASSIST) at the University will review the report and advise on an individual basis.

### **05. How do I prepare for the OSCE?**

The OSCE is designed to assess your ability to competently apply your professional nursing associate skills and knowledge in the UK. It is set at the level expected of nursing associates as they enter the profession at the point of registration. This means that you must show that you can apply knowledge to the care of patients at the level expected of a newly registered nursing associate.

**The examination is testing your ability to apply knowledge to the care of patients rather than how well you can remember and recite facts.** All of the scenarios and any questions relate to current best practice and you should answer them in relation to **published evidence** and not according to local arrangements.

Once payment has been received by the University for your OSCE exam, you will be enrolled onto our online learning platform – NILE – and login details will be sent to you. On this site you will find useful information, links to video's, examples of documentation used in the examination process and a comprehensive reading list. However, you are advised to access the following to give you a starting point:

NMC (2018) The Code –

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/nmc-code.pdf>

Royal Pharmaceutical Society (2018) Professional guidance on the safe and secure handling of medicines:

<https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/setting-professional-standards/safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines/professional-guidance-on-the-safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines>

Resuscitation Council (2015) UK Guidelines for In-hospital resuscitation –

<https://www.resus.org.uk/resuscitation-guidelines/in-hospital-resuscitation/>

The handbook for nurse associates and assistant practitioners – This book is a key text of academic education with clinical competencies included which you will find useful when preparing for the EU Aptitude Test.

Royal Marsden (2015) Clinical Nursing Procedures – This book is available online through the NILE site once you have paid and booked your OSCE exam.

### Please note:

We have become aware that some organisations and consultancies are offering OSCE preparation training sessions for candidates for Part 2 of the Test of Competence.

Please be aware that by attending these courses offered by 3rd parties, you do so at your own risk, these training sessions are NOT endorsed or approved by either the University of Northampton or the NMC and could prepare you inaccurately for the exam.

## 06. Overview

Your ability to apply your knowledge has already been tested in Part 1 of the NMC's Test of Competence. In Part 2 you will be tested on your clinical and communication skills. In other words, you will demonstrate how you **apply holistic patient centered nursing associate care alongside your competency in key clinical skills.**

Everything you see in the OSCE comes from <https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/joining-the-register/register-nursing-associate/outside-eu-eea/> which sets out the scope and content of the Test in terms of the topics, skills and procedures that a newly registered nursing associate would need to know and be able to do.

If a scenario involved a vulnerable adult or child with a non-accidental injury, candidates would be expected to know that the person or child may need to be removed from those suspected of causing the injury. Candidates would be expected to know how to raise concerns, know that they should alert the relevant protection team and be able to share information appropriately within and across care teams. We **do not** expect candidates to have detailed information about local procedures or local policies.

We cannot test everything on the blueprint, but we will test typical nursing associate scenarios and clinical skills that UK nurse associates will encounter.

## 07. Evidence base for nursing associate practice

You can find evidence based guidelines in nursing journals and texts and from professional organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Midwives. The National Institute of Healthcare and Excellence and Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network are also useful sources; several useful links are also provided in the test blue print.

<http://www.nice.org.uk> <http://www.sign.ac.uk>

Access to further OSCE resources provided by the University of Northampton for the NMC's Test of Competence is available after you have enrolled for the Test.

## 08. What will I be tested on?

The OSCE is made up of six stations. The time allocated for each station will vary and you will be advised of the length of each station on the day. All stations will be scenario based and include:

- 1) Ongoing assessment

- 2) Implementing care
- 3) Ongoing care
- 4) Clinical skills assessment 1
- 5) Clinical skills assessment 2
- 6) Clinical skills assessment 3

Please remember that you will have done many of these nursing associate skills several times before. **Make sure** that you read the station instructions & scenarios carefully. Do not be afraid to look at them again if you are unsure. You will not be penalised for this.

You will be tested on your ability to achieve competency in a variety of procedures referred to in *Annexe B: Procedures to be undertaken by the nursing associate* in the [Standards of proficiency for nursing associates \(NMC, 2018\)](#).

### 09. Communication skills

Communication is central to nursing associate practice and will **continually** be assessed during the OSCE's.

**We assess the full range of communication skills (verbal, nonverbal and written) by observing the interaction between the candidate and a simulated patient (this may be an actor or a nursing manikin) and also by assessing your documentation in each station.**

The examiner will assess your approach to the simulated patient all through the examination, and they will award marks for communication skills in accordance with the Standards in *Annexe A: Communication and relationship management skills* in the [Standards of proficiency for nursing associates \(NMC, 2018\)](#).

You should speak to the simulated patient as you would any patient you are meeting for the first time. **If you are being assessed using a nursing manikin, please remember to verbalise your actions and reasons for actions in the same way that you would with a real patient.** If you ask the simulated patient a question the assessor will answer accordingly.

## The OSCE day

### 1. General Information about the Test Centre

Please allow plenty of time to travel to the Competence Test Centre. Bear in mind that rush hour traffic often causes delays when approaching the town centre. The University of Northampton Innovation Centre is situated in Green Street, Northampton, NN1 1SY (Opposite Northampton train station – please remember to use all pedestrian crossings where necessary)

Please click [here](#) for further direction. If you arrive late, you might not be able to take the OSCE.

A full refund will only be made if more than 3 weeks notice is given of a cancellation or re-schedule, see below for refund rates:



- Over 3 weeks of cancellation notice: Full refund
- Less than 3 weeks cancellation notice: No refund unless in exceptional circumstances, for which a medical certificate may be requested.

No refund will be given for non-attendance or if no prior notice (within the stated time above) of cancellation is given.

We **do not** have room to allow friends or family, including children, to wait for you while you are taking the OSCE.

**Do not** bring large suitcases to the assessment centre because we have **no** storage space for anything other than for small handbags/rucksacks.

When you arrive, we will check any documents that you have been asked to bring. Once these documents have been checked, your photograph will be taken and stored on our database. We store your photograph so that we can prove that you are the person we saw in case of identity theft. Photographic ID will be produced on your arrival, which you **must** wear at all times in the Test Centre. You will be asked to store your belongings in a **small** locker before moving to the waiting rooms, so please avoid bringing bulky coats.

Smoking is illegal in enclosed public spaces and workplaces in the UK. There is no smoking in or at the Test Centre. Once you have entered the Test Centre you will not be allowed to leave until the OSCE is finished.

Before the OSCE you will be briefed on its format.

## 2. Fitness to Test

Candidates will need to be fit and well to undertake the Test. All candidates will be asked to complete a declaration form. (Appendix 5)

It is acknowledged that a candidate with a declared disability may require reasonable adjustments in order to complete the Test. The request for reasonable adjustments **must be made before** the date of the Test by email to [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk). A reasonable adjustment will allow for a candidate to undertake nursing associate care which:

- Remains effective and does not result in altered patient care
- Is accepted within professional nursing associate practices
- Enables the candidate to demonstrate competency
- Will not place the candidate or patient at risk of harm by injury or illness

A reasonable adjustment will not allow the required standard of competence to be reduced because of a disability.

**Reasonable adjustments can be made to assess how you demonstrate that you have met a competency or standard. The standard or competency itself is not subject to a reasonable**

**adjustment. If you have a health condition we strongly advise you to disclose it because it means that the Test Centre can give you information about support that may be available to you and, if necessary, make any special arrangements.**

### 3. Fire alarm

If there is a fire alarm, follow the directions of the Test Centre staff to the fire exit. If the fire alarm sounds during the OSCE, you should remain with your examiner at all times. Staff will direct you to an assembly point and will conduct a roll call to make sure that all examiners, role players and candidates are gathered together. You must not speak to other candidates during an emergency evacuation. Once the all clear has been given you will be directed back to the Test Centre and given instructions about resuming the OSCE.

### 4. Identification

We will check your identity at the Test Centre and we will only accept a valid passport.

If the name on your passport is different from the email/letter from the NMC authorising you to test, you must provide original evidence that you are the person named in that email/letter. We will accept:

- Your marriage certificate
- A declaration from the awarding body, which granted your nursing associate qualification, stating that both names relate to you

You must also bring your authorisation to test email/letter from the NMC bearing your candidate number.

If you do not bring the documents listed above, or if the passport is not valid or current, **you will not be allowed** to take the examination. You would then have to go through the booking process again.

The NMC will also be there on the day to verify your documents which you are submitting as part of your application. If you have these ready, please bring them along. It is OK if you don't have them in time for your OSCE, but you'll need to return to the OSCE centre or the NMC London office at a later stage to have your verification check before you can be registered. For more information on this, please visit the [NMC website](#) or contact [overseas.enquiries@nmc-uk.org](mailto:overseas.enquiries@nmc-uk.org).

### 5. What can I expect at the OSCE?

In stations which involve demonstrating a practical skill, you will find a manikin/actor or other piece of equipment.

In stations that require you to complete a nursing associate on-going assessment, a prepared actor will play the role of a patient. You must treat the simulated patient as you would a real patient.

The examiner will observe you but will not intervene.

**You must clean your hands thoroughly and effectively before approaching any station as hand hygiene is an extremely important. Soap, water and hand gel will be available at all stations.**

Each station will have written candidate instructions which will also give relevant information about the patient, such as name, age and major problems.

The length of each station may vary. The stations are clearly numbered and staff will be there to help you move from station to station and there are six stations in which you are assessed.

A lead assessor will be overseeing the test day, with an additional assessor based at each station who will be observing the OSCE. Each station has a camera and sound system installed to allow observation, reducing the need for observers to enter and sit in stations. **Built in cameras will record the examination and will be used to review the examination afterwards for quality assurance purposes.** This is not optional but part of the process so you will be asked, at the point of booking, to consent that you understand videoing will take place throughout the OSCEs. The videos are used for examination and reviewing purposes only by University and NMC staff.

**Please note: Candidates do not have right to see their filmed assessment – It is treated as an exam script. Once the script has been marked and moderated the pass or fail decision is final and candidates or any sponsoring authority cannot request access to the film. An appeal or complaint may involve the lead examiners reviewing candidate's filmed assessments but films would not be released to candidates or their sponsors.**

## 6. How should I dress?

We require that you dress for the OSCE in a manner which is appropriate for a clinical environment.

All nursing associates must be dressed professionally, maintain a high standard of infection control and ensure the health and safety of themselves and their patients. The guidelines below are based on the expected standards for pre-registration healthcare students at the University of Northampton. They mirror the professional standards required of all health care professionals in the UK.

**Hair:** Must be off the face and secured above the collar. Hair should be tied up with simple hair bands, hair decorations should not be worn as they can potentially be used as weapons. Hair should be a natural shade and extremes of styles are not acceptable. Beards and moustaches should be kept clean and trimmed and tidy. Presentation at all times must be professional.

**Nails:** Must be kept short and unvarnished with no extensions or decoration.

**Makeup:** Must be kept to a minimum and be discreet and natural.

**Jewellery:** Only single plain “ball” ear studs are allowed, a maximum of one per ear. A single plain band ring is allowed, i.e. wedding or commitment ring. No other jewellery, including tongue piercing or body jewellery, is permitted

**Wristwatches:** Are not to be worn

**Head Veil/Turban:** Can be worn on religious grounds. They must be appropriate in colour we recommend plain black or navy, and they must be tucked into the collar of your tunic/polo shirt

**Shoes:** Must be plain flat black and rubber soled, enclosing the whole foot and not made of porous or absorbent material in order to protect the foot from bodily fluids and equipment

**Socks and Tights:** Flesh coloured/black tights or dark blue/black socks with trousers

Candidates **must not** wear neck ties

Candidates **must not** wear jeans, shorts or sandals

Nursing associates in the UK frequently wear dark plain trousers and plain polo shirts/tunics and where possible candidates should be dressed in a similar manner.

Candidates who wish to wear alternatives, for example, because of cultural or maternity requirements, should discuss this with the Test Centre **before** arriving for the OSCE.

It is important that patients feel able to build trust and are able to communicate freely; some may find that a face veil worn by a nursing associate presents an obstacle to communication. Candidates and registered nursing associates must respond to a patient’s individual needs and take steps to overcome communication barriers.

## 7. What conduct is expected during the OSCE?

The OSCE is a formal examination and candidates are required to behave appropriately and in accordance with University regulations and policies.

Candidates are already professional nursing associates and are expected to behave in a professional manner at all time while at the Test Centre.

You will be provided with all the materials you need during the examination.

## 8. Candidate rules at the Test Centre

All personal items must be placed in the **small** locker provided at the Test Centre. ***The Test Centre will take no responsibility for any lost, stolen or misplaced items.***

The following items are not allowed in the OSCE nor can they be accessed during your time at the Test Centre:

- Any educational, test preparation or study materials
- Personal items, including mobile phones, hand-held computers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), pagers, watches or other electronic devices
- Weapons of any kind

Mobile phones, pagers or other electronic devices must be **turned off** before storing them in the locker.

During your stay at the Test Centre **you are not allowed** to access personal items other than medication or foods which are required at a specific time and you **must** have arranged this in advance with the Test Centre. If you require access to medical devices or aides during the OSCE please inform centre staff when booking your OSCE examination.

### 9. Confidentiality

As a registered nursing associate you are bound by the [NMC \(2018\) Code](#). Any cheating or misconduct during the OSCE or breaching confidentiality of the examination may bring your profession into disrepute and may raise doubts about your fitness to practice. Such incidents will be reported to the NMC by the examiners and will be investigated.

You must not seek help or attempt to seek help from any other party during the OSCE. This includes in person or by phone, text, messaging, email or any form of social media.

You must not disclose or discuss with anyone, including instructors, information about the OSCEs. This also includes posting or discussing scenarios or skills the internet or any form of social media, such as Twitter or Facebook.

### 10. Taking the OSCE

The results of the OSCE must be an accurate reflection of the authorised candidate's knowledge and professional skills as a nursing associate.

- You **must not** take or attempt to take the OSCE for anyone else
- You **must not** allow or attempt to allow anyone else to take the OSCE for you
- You **must not** engage in any behaviour deemed to be disruptive at any time while in the Test Centre or when taking the OSCE.

### 11. Grounds for dismissal or cancellation of OSCE results

All candidates must comply fully with the Test Centre staff's instructions and/or the Test Centre rules and regulations or they will risk having their OSCE results withheld, dismissed or cancelled.

Candidates who do not comply with the Test Centre staff's instructions or Test Centre's rules and regulations may be asked to leave the Test Centre and their fees **will not** be refunded.

Such incidents will be reported by the examiners and investigated. The OSCE result may be withheld during an investigation.

**The University will always report such incidents to the NMC.**

### 12. How is the OSCE marked?

**OSCE:** Each OSCE station has a unique criteria-based assessment sheet which is matched to the scenario or skill being assessed and examiners will score each criterion. The criteria is mapped against the [Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes \(NMC, 2018\)](#) and [Standards of proficiency for nursing associates \(NMC, 2018\)](#) as well as the [NMC Code 2018](#).

The following is an example of a criterion from the *Ongoing Care* station:

*Handwriting is clear and legible* - Failing to write clearly and legibly could result in a fail in this station as it is important that other staff are able to read your care plan to continue to provide safe and effective care.

The following are the scores and descriptions indicating candidate performance for each criterion:

Score	Description
<b>FAIL</b>	The candidate is unable to demonstrate competence or has omitted key aspects/components of the competency/skill. This level of practice would be insufficient and may cause patient harm by act or omission.
<b>PASS</b>	The candidate has demonstrated safe and effective competence/skill in line with NMC requirements at the point of entry to the register. This candidate has provided safe acceptable standard of care during the OSCE.

### 13. The Passing Standard

To PASS the OSCE the candidate must demonstrate safe and effective practice in each station. This is then moderated by a panel of assessors before the final grade is awarded for the station.

#### ***Can I have my OSCE remarked?***

All OSCEs are recorded and all OSCEs deemed a fail will ALWAYS be reviewed by the PANEL of examiners on the day of the OSCE. Failed OSCEs are automatically remarked and checked as part of the Quality Assurance process.

**The Test Centre Manager will coordinate any appeals, complaints, reasonable adjustments and fitness to practice issues and refer such matters to the Test Panel for investigation and reporting to the NMC.**

### Unsafe Practice and Cessation of Assessment

In the event that any candidate demonstrates unsafe practice which may place the candidate, simulated patient or examiner at risk then a U score (unsafe practice) must be awarded. A U score denotes an OSCE station fail.

### 14. How Do I Get the Results of the OSCE

The NMC will inform candidates of the result of the OSCE within 5 working days. Please **do not** ask the examiners or Test Centre staff.

### 15. What are the potential results?

Result	Description
PASS	The NMC will contact you and begin the process of registering you as a nursing associate in the UK.
Partial Fail	Candidates who fail up to four stations will be required to resit the stations they have failed only. The resit will be at 50% cost
Full Full	Candidates who fail five or six stations will be required to resit the stations they have failed at 100% cost.

The NMC Test of Competence is split into 2 parts; 3 skills station and 3 nursing associate scenario stations which form a sequential candidate journey.

### 16. What form will the feedback come in?

You can expect to receive feedback on the aspects of the test in which you failed to meet the level of competence. This will be a brief account of how you failed to show competence. The centre is not allowed to teach you how to pass the exam so the feedback will be short and factual.

For example, if a candidate failed ANTT for contaminating their yellow bag when setting up the field the feedback would read as follows:

*“ANTT: You failed to show competence in this station. When setting out your sterile field you contaminated the yellow bag and as a result contaminated your sterile field. This is a patient safety risk resulting in a fail.”*

### 17. What happens if I pass?

The NMC will contact you and begin the process of registering you as a nursing associate in the UK.

### 18. Can I have more than one attempt if I fail the OSCE?

Candidates will receive an email confirming their application was accepted and that they can book their OSCE. The NMC will also inform the Test Centre.

Candidates are permitted three attempts as part of one application (an initial sitting, a resit (partial or full) and a 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt (partial or full resit). The NMC require a **minimum** of **10 working days** between the initial attempt and the resit and **6 months** between the resit and a 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt. **However, if you appeal the process, you will have to wait for the investigation to be completed before you can book a resit if your appeal is not upheld.**

If a candidate fails their 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt, their NMC application will close, and applicants are not allowed to sit the exam for a minimum of six months.

Candidates should use the time to ensure they are adequately prepared for the OSCE. Applicants can start their re-application earlier than six months – please contact [overseas.reapplication@nmc-uk.org](mailto:overseas.reapplication@nmc-uk.org) to start this process.

## Candidate Guidance

The next section of the handbook provides guidance for candidates considering appeals, complaints, or applying for mitigating circumstances. The Test Centre Manager will always offer guidance and advice in such matters. If candidates, after pursuing such issues, remain unhappy with the outcome and decisions reached they have the right to raise the matter with the NMC.

### 19. Can I appeal my result?

#### What grounds can be used as the basis for an appeal?

If you believe that a mistake has been made at any point during the **process** of your Test of Competence, or that an **irregularity** has occurred in the **conduct** of the OSCE, and you think that this has had a direct and demonstrably detrimental effect on your performance then you may be able to make an appeal. Therefore, you cannot appeal the **result**, you can only appeal the **process**. See **Appendix 1 for the Appeals Form**.

### 20. What is a complaint and how can I make one?

If you are dissatisfied with a service that the University is providing, or with the person who is providing it, then you can raise the matter as a complaint. You should always try to resolve a problem as close as possible to its source. So, for example, if you have a problem with your examiner you should speak to the Lead Assessor or Invigilator at the time. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you can make a formal complaint. See **Appendix 2 for the candidate guidance on making complaint to the NMC**.

**Please note:** Candidates do not have right to see their filmed assessment – It is treated as an exam script. Once the script has been marked and moderated the pass or fail decision is final and candidates or any sponsoring authority cannot request access to the film. An appeal will involve the investigating panel, reviewing candidate's filmed assessments but films will not be released to candidates or their sponsors.

### 21. Fitness to practice during the OSCE?

Your fitness to practice, during the OSCE, may be questioned if a member of the Test Centre staff, an examiner, a simulated patient or another candidate expresses concerns that you are failing to maintain standards and/or that your conduct is inappropriate to your profession. Examples may include; a breach of confidentiality and professional misconduct (which may call into question your honesty and integrity).

If this occurs your OSCE may be stopped and an incident form will be completed and forwarded to the NMC. If you are allowed to continue an incident form will still be submitted and you will be informed of this at the time of your OSCE.



## 22. What happens if I am unable to attend the OSCE because of sudden illness or circumstance beyond my control?

Candidates must make every attempt to attend their booked OSCE appointment. Cancellations before 48 hours of the Test **will not incur** a financial penalty nor will they count as an attempt for the NMC. However, cancellations made less than 48 hours before the Test **will not** be refunded and they will **not count** as an NMC attempt.

### **When can you apply for mitigating circumstances to be considered?**

If you are unable to attend the OSCE examination because you are ill, or if you have a personal issue which prevents you from attending, you should contact the Test Centre by emailing [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk). You must remember to include independent evidence, for example, a hospital appointment letter or a copy of a prescription with your application. It is your responsibility to collect this evidence. If you arrive to sit your OSCE and you do not feel well enough to proceed or you become unwell during the exam, you must inform the invigilator & lead assessor and they will support you to complete a Mitigating Circumstances form. This will defer your assessment and allow you to re-book your OSCE. By taking the OSCE you would declare yourself as fit to take the exam and you will be unable to defer an assessment once you have commenced or appeal that you were unfit. Evidenced personal circumstances, such as sudden illness, may be permitted as reasons for re-booking the OSCE at short notice. Simply being late for the OSCE or changing your mind about taking the OSCE less than 48 hours before the booked time will mean that you will have to pay again. If you do not sit the OSCE it will not count as an attempt. **See Appendix 3 for candidate guidance and form.**

### **I am pregnant or breast feeding a small baby, how will this affect my OSCE?**

The University will seek to support candidates who are pregnant or have very young children and protect them from unfavorable treatment. The Test Centre will be flexible to enable the candidate when possible to take the OSCE as planned, except when a significant risk is identified. **Candidates can find guidance in Appendix 4.**

## 23. I have a disability; can the Test Centre accommodate my needs?

Our staff are committed to ensuring impartiality and equality of opportunity in the delivery of our services. Our premises are accessible. The Test Centre will also act on NMC guidance in this matter, but special examination arrangements are made for candidates with disabilities or those registered as dyslexic or with other additional needs. Candidates are asked to declare their evidenced needs for reasonable adjustments when booking their OSCE and will be required to produce supporting evidence.

The Test Centre Manager will seek advice on the reasonable adjustment which is possible for the candidate. Simple changes such as lowering beds, accommodating candidate's need to sit or stand, or the increased need for toilet breaks during pregnancy can be easily arranged when the Test Centre is notified in advance. Candidates who need to access medical devices during the OSCE can be accommodated with advance notification prior to booking. The Test Centre will not allow the required

level of competence to be reduced because of a disability. Candidates with additional needs must declare them on the health declaration form that will be emailed to candidates at point of booking and confirmation of test date.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Modified Candidate Guidance

#### Appeal Guide and Form for the Test of Competence

##### What grounds can I use as the basis for an appeal?

If you believe that the process was compromised during the exam or that an irregularity has occurred in the conduct of the examination, and you think that this has had a direct and demonstrably detrimental effect on your performance, then you may be able to make an appeal. The process refers to any concerns you may have in relation to how the exam was conducted. The Test of Competence has been designed to be current, authentic, valid and reliable. If you feel your performance was adversely affected by how you were briefed about the test or instructed during the testing process, you may have grounds for appeal.

Marks awarded to your work will have been through a rigorous process of moderation involving at least two internal markers and the oversight of marking standards by an external examiner, who approves all grades awarded.

**In summary – The University will not accept an appeal against the academic and/or professional judgments of examiners *per se*. Therefore, you cannot appeal the result of your exam, you can only appeal on the process. An appeal will only be considered if it meets the grounds listed above.**

##### Where can I obtain advice?

If you have any uncertainties about the information contained in this Guide you should consult the Test Centre Manager.

##### How should I appeal?

You will need to complete the form appended to this Guide on page 23 and submit it to the Test Centre Manager within 5 days of receiving your OSCE result.

##### Where should I submit the form?

Where possible, you should submit the form to the Test Centre. Seal the form in an envelope, mark it Private and Confidential, and address it to the Test Centre Manager, Competence Test Centre, Innovation Centre, Green Street, Northampton, NN1 1SY. Alternatively you can email: [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk) addressing it as Private and Confidential to the Test Centre Manager.

### **How will my appeal be dealt with?**

The Test Centre Manager will forward your appeal for review. If you make a legitimate appeal on acceptable grounds, the Test Panel will appoint an investigator to examine your case. The investigator will come to a conclusion and will write to the panel either stating that your appeal should be upheld or that it should not.

### **How long will it take to reach a decision?**

If you make an appeal, then **the investigation will normally be completed within four weeks.** **However, if you appeal, you will have to wait for the investigation to be completed before you can book a resit if your appeal is not upheld.** If you want an update on the progress of your appeal, then you should contact the Test Centre Manager.

### **What outcome can I expect if I make an appeal?**

The Test Panel will decide whether or not to uphold your appeal. You will be notified of this decision by email and in writing.

Once your appeal has been formally heard by the University of Northampton and the outcome has been communicated to you, this concludes the University's appeal process.

If your appeal does not meet the criteria as stated above, you will be advised of your next course of action.

If you wish to complain, the complaints procedure is outlined on the NMC website <https://www.nmc.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-about-us/> - see appendix 2

**Academic Appeal Form - Level 1**

This form should be submitted to the Test Centre Manager within **five** days of receiving your OSCE result.

<b>Your name</b>	
<b>Candidate Number</b>	
<b>Correspondence address</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Date Test of Competence (OSCE) :</b>	
<b>Grounds for Appeal</b> (You should provide full details of the nature of the irregularity that you feel has occurred.)	

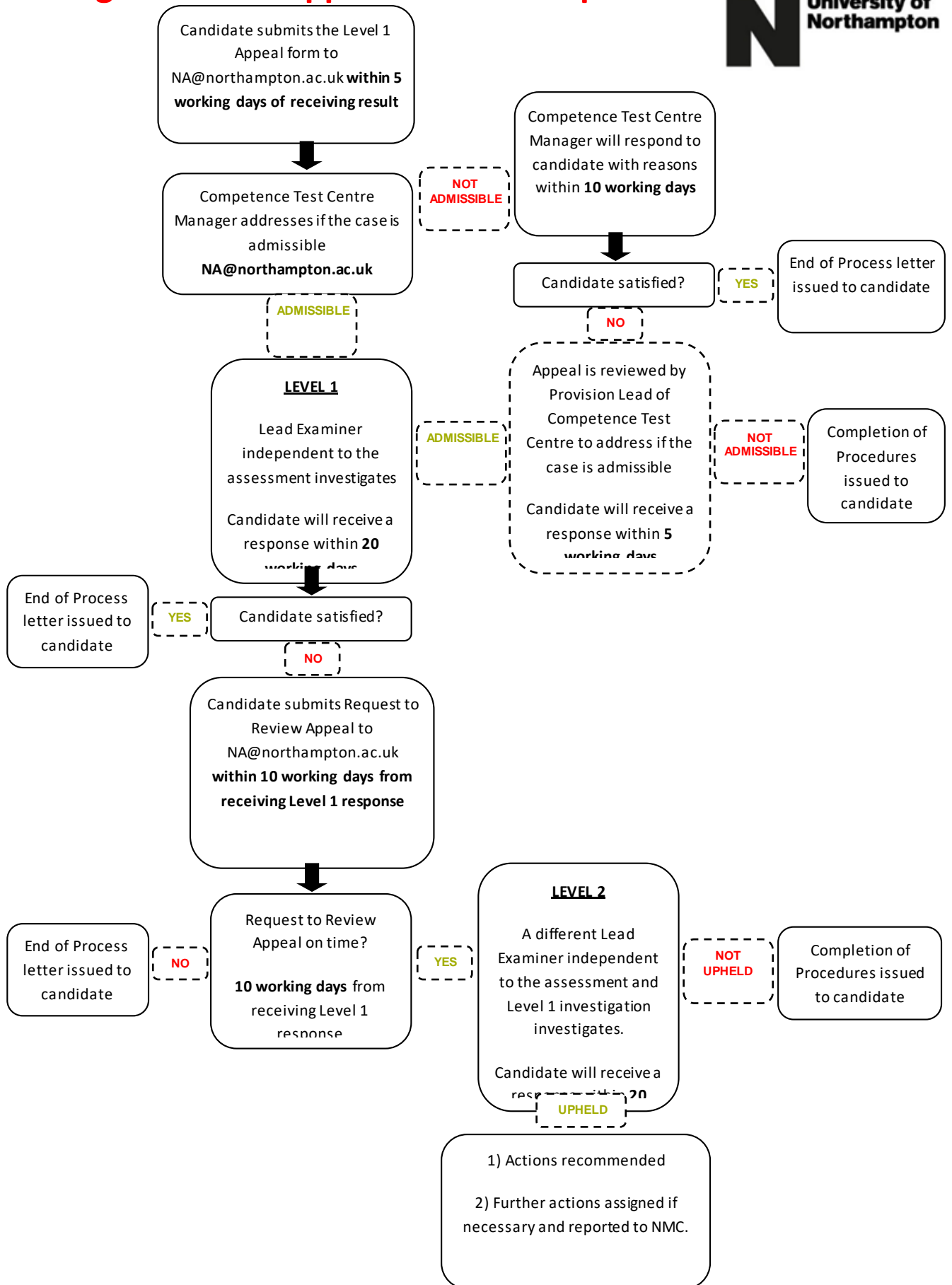
I declare that the information given is true and that I am willing to answer further questions if necessary:

Signed: ..... Date: .....

This form should be submitted to the Test Centre Manager, Competency Test Centre, The University of Northampton Innovation Centre, Green Street, Northampton, NN1 1SY in a sealed envelope and it will be forwarded for review (For official use)

Date Received:	Logged:	File created
Appeal Acknowledged:		

# Nursing Associate Appeal Process Map



## Candidate Complaint Guide and Form

### What is a complaint?

If you are dissatisfied with a service that the University is providing, or with the person who is providing it, then you can raise the matter as a complaint.

### How should I make a complaint?

You should always try to resolve a problem as close as possible to its source. So, for example, if you have a problem with your examiner you should speak to the Lead Assessor or Invigilator of your nursing associate OSCE.

### What outcome can you expect if you make a complaint?

The University expects its entire staff to be receptive to issues raised by candidates. Complaints will be addressed initially through an informal process involving discussions with people in the Department where the difficulty has arisen.

### What should I do if I am dissatisfied with the outcome?

In some cases, it may be felt that the candidate's complaint has not been resolved by the informal process. In such cases you can progress the complaint to Level 1 by completing and submitting the Level 1 Complaints Form (on page 27) to [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk). (see the Complaints Process Map on page 29)

### What happens if I make a formal complaint?

The University will appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation into the matter(s) that you have raised and to report back to you within **20 working days**. You should note that you **should not** submit a formal level 1 complain unless you have already attempted to resolve your issue(s) via the informal process.

### Won't my examiners treat me differently if I make a complaint about them?

It is part of the University's Policy that no one bringing a complaint, whether successfully or otherwise, will be treated less favourably by any member of staff than if the complaint had not been brought. If evidence to the contrary is reported, then the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

### Where can I obtain advice?

If you have any uncertainties about the information contained in this Guide you should consult the Test Centre Manager on [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk).



**What if I am dissatisfied about the Level 1 Complaint outcome?**

You should submit a Request to Review Complaint to [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk) within 10 working days of receiving your Level 1 response. This then escalates to a Level 2 Complaint. Members of staff outside of the Competence Test Centre will now investigate. You will receive a response within 20 working days.

**How long will it take to make a decision?**

If you can resolve your issues at the informal stage, then it will not take very long at all. If you make a formal complaint then the investigation may take longer, but the University endeavours to provide you with a response within 20 working days of receiving your complaint at either Level 1 or 2.



**Please explain why you are dissatisfied with the response you have received**

**Please indicate what outcome or further action you are expecting**

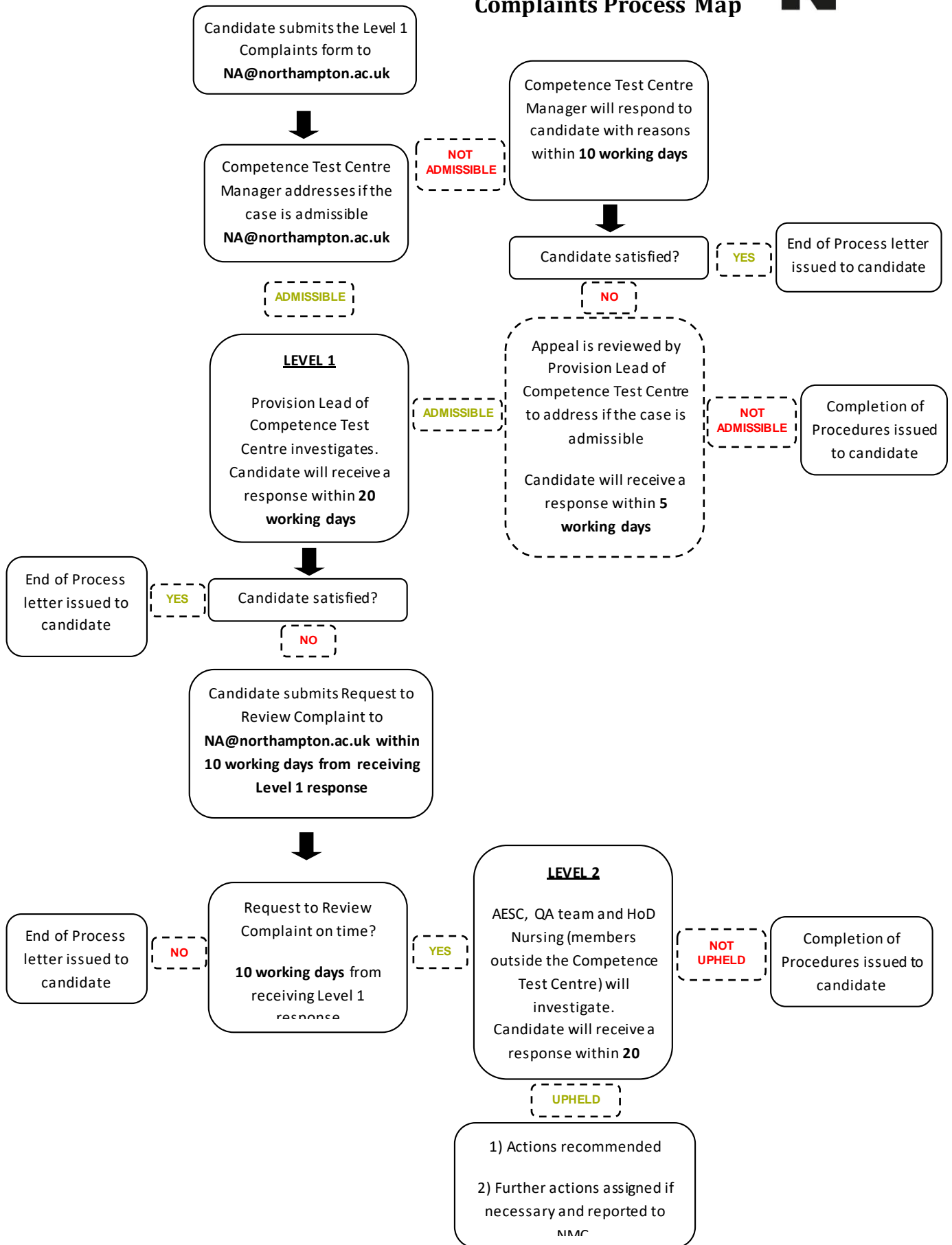
**Please provide any documents you believe support your complaint.**

I declare that the information given is true and that I am willing to answer further questions if necessary:

Signed: .....

Date: .....

## Complaints Process Map



### Candidate Guidance on Mitigating Circumstances

#### What are mitigating circumstances?

Mitigating circumstances are events that have **significantly** disrupted your OSCE. They **must** be:

- serious or acute
- beyond your ability to foresee and control

#### When can you apply for mitigating circumstances to be considered?

If you are unable to attend, because you are ill, or if you have a personal issue which prevents you from engaging with the OSCE, you should complete and submit the Mitigating Circumstances Application form in this Guide. **You must remember to include independent evidence**, for example, a hospital appointment letter or a copy of a prescription with your application: it is your responsibility to collect this evidence.

#### What outcome can you expect if you apply for mitigating circumstances?

There are a number of issues that **cannot** be addressed through the submission of a mitigating circumstances application:

1. Under no circumstances will grades awarded to your OSCE be changed. All OSCEs are graded upon their own merits and no allowance will be made for mitigating circumstances. A mitigating circumstances application for a completed OSCE **will not** be considered.
2. Only in very exceptional cases will applications be accepted for mitigating circumstances after the set deadline for the examination has passed. If you do apply late you must explain why.
3. A known disability is not, *per se*, a reason to submit a mitigating circumstance application, although (for example) unforeseen illness resulting from a disability may be. Reasonable adjustments to OSCE examinations will normally be made as required to support candidates with a disability. Requests for such adjustments should be discussed with the Test Centre Manager in advance of the OSCE examination.
4. The NMC determines the number of opportunities a candidate has to take the OSCE examinations.

If you miss the first opportunity and have not sat the OSCE and have successfully applied for mitigating circumstances, your attempt will not count.

If you do not sit the OSCE your attempt will not count.

If you sit the OSCE and are unsuccessful in applying for mitigation, the attempt will count.

### **What happens if I am ill on the day of an OSCE examination?**

If you are too ill to start the OSCE examination, then you need to let the Test Centre know this as soon as possible; you then need to submit an application for mitigating circumstances.

If you become ill during an OSCE examination then you need to let the invigilator know, so that it can be included in the report.

If you sit the OSCE examination and are successful in applying for mitigation, the attempt will not count.

Candidates should make every effort to cancel their OSCE a minimum of 48 hours before the exam is booked (if the exam is on a Monday cancellation should occur on the Thursday before). Refunds will not be given routinely if OSCEs are cancelled at short notice.

**Mitigating Circumstances Application**

**Your details:**

Name: ..... Number: .....

Tel. .... Email: .....

OSCE date ..... .....

**OSCE Affected by Mitigating Circumstances**

OSCE number		Original Exam Date

***For Office Use:***

<i>Date Form passed to AA:</i>	<i>Filter:</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Chair's Action: ..... Date: .....</i>				
<i>Decision:</i>	<i>Upheld</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Declined</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Student Status:</i>				
<i>Reason for decision:</i>				
<b>SAT:</b> Log IN <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Log Outcome <input type="checkbox"/> H grade <input type="checkbox"/> Exams/Module Leader <input type="checkbox"/>				

**Your Mitigating Circumstances** (*You must provide precise dates of any illness or other circumstances and state how your OSCE was affected and what steps you took to recover the situation.*)

**Declaration**

I declare that the details included in this application, including any appended statements, are true and that I have read and understand the foregoing Mitigating Circumstances Guide.

Signed: .....Date:.....



## Appendix 4

### Summary of key responsibilities for supporting a candidate who is pregnant

#### The University will:

- ensure that a candidate who is pregnant, or has given birth within the last 26 weeks, is protected from unfavourable treatment;
- accommodate their needs both before and during the OSCE in so far as is reasonably practicable to allow her to successfully complete the OSCE;
- publish this guidance and review/update as necessary in order that all members of the University community are aware of the support available and their role in providing that support;
- encourage candidates to disclose a pregnancy in confidence at an early stage to the Test Centre

#### When a candidate's pregnancy is disclosed, the Test Centre Manager is expected to:

- read and follow this guidance;
- treat any disclosure confidentially and verify that a candidate has no objections to their pregnancy being discussed with other University staff;
- agree a support plan and ensure that it is implemented;
- complete a risk assessment.

#### Candidates (and applicants) are advised to:

- read this guidance in order to understand the University's approach to supporting candidates who are pregnant or have very young children;
- disclose their pregnancy at the earliest opportunity, to enable the consideration of any necessary support arrangements or adjustments during the OSCE;
- discuss any concerns they have relating to their pregnancy with their own GP and the Test Centre Manager;
- ensure that they have received a copy of the completed risk assessment if appropriate.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University recognises that being or becoming pregnant, or having a very young child should not, in itself, be a barrier to applying for, starting, succeeding in, or completing the Test of Competence. The University will be as flexible as is reasonable, in accordance with University regulations and the legal framework, in which the University operates.
- 1.2 This guide provides information and advice about the University's approach to supporting a candidate who is pregnant

## 2. Definitions

- **Candidates** referring to those who are pregnant or have very young children
- **Very young children** – those under 26 weeks of age
- **New parent** – those with children under 26 weeks

## 3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 Avoiding less favourable treatment. The University will not treat a candidate (or applicant) less favourably than other candidates.
- 3.2 Taking a flexible approach. The University will take a flexible approach, in line with University regulations, to facilitating the ability of the candidate to take the Test of Competence.
- 3.3 Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach. All those involved should take an open-minded and non-judgmental approach. Information provided by the candidate should be treated sensitively and only passed on to others on a need-to-know basis.
- 3.4 Enabling informed choices. No one should attempt to directly or unduly influence candidate's decisions. The University's role is to provide context and advice, and to explore, in consultation with the candidate and others, flexibility that can be applied to the Test of Competence. The emphasis is on candidates making informed choices based on full knowledge of the implications of these choices. However, in **exceptional circumstances** where it has been identified that there is a significant risk to the health and welfare of either the candidate and/or unborn child, the University may have to advise a course of action which is **not negotiable**.

## 4. Notification of pregnancy

- 4.1 Candidates are strongly advised to inform the Test Centre as soon as it is practicable. This is particularly important where there may be a risk to the health and safety of the candidate and/or her unborn child.
- 4.2 Candidates are not obligated to inform the Test Centre if they become pregnant, decide to terminate a pregnancy or miscarry. However, it is important to note that the University can only adopt a flexible approach, provide support or make adjustments if it is aware of the situation.
- 4.3 When deciding whether to notify the University, the candidate is encouraged to consider that:
  - there may be elements of the Test of Competence that could present a health and safety risk to her and/or her unborn child

## 5. Process

**Step 1** - The candidate is strongly advised to consult her own GP to discuss medical issues relating to her pregnancy prior to approaching the Test Centre.

**Step 2** - Candidates may inform the Test Centre of any pregnancy issues when booking the OSCE. It is essential that a risk assessment is undertaken (**see step 3**) and the checklist is completed (**please contact [NA@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:NA@northampton.ac.uk) to obtain this**) to ensure all issues are discussed at an early stage and a support plan initiated.

**Step 3 - Risk Assessment** - The Test Centre Manager should ensure that appropriate steps are taken in relation to health and safety issues. This will involve a risk assessment for the individual candidate.

**Step 4 - Candidate Support Plan** - Once discussed and agreed, a written candidate support plan for the Test of Competence will detail any specific flexibility agreed. This should be given/sent to the candidate. A written agreement of agreed flexibilities should be sought from the candidate. A copy of this should be filed with the candidate's personal record held by Test Centre.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the degree of flexibility offered, they may ask for information about the complaints procedures or make a formal complaint, if appropriate, in line with complaint guidance.

**Step 5 - Communicating the Support Plan** - The Test Centre Manager should communicate the agreed candidate support plan to other relevant examiners. Information should be passed on sensitively and in confidence.

## 6. Determining Flexibility

The Test Centre does not have to agree to any or all requests. There may be situations where it is not possible to agree to a particular request; such as, where the consequences of agreeing to requests are likely to have a detrimental effect on the candidate. The candidate must be made fully aware of these consequences. However, the final decision will rest with the candidate as to whether they would still like to sit the OSCE.

When considering declining a request, the University's Equality & Diversity Advisor should be consulted before the decision is made. Candidates can seek bespoke advice on what might constitute as appropriate flexibility in a particular case from the University's Equality and Diversity Advisor.

If it is decided to decline a request, the reasons will be recorded and the candidate will be informed as to why this particular request is not considered "reasonable" in the circumstances. This will be recorded in the candidate support plan.

In cases where deferring the OSCE would lead to taking longer to complete the Test of Competence than would normally be permissible by the NMC, the Test Centre should still strive to demonstrate a flexible approach, where practicable, in relation to this deadline for completion, whilst ensuring that the student does not exceed the overall time limit allowed by the NMC. If the candidate is likely to exceed the time allowed to complete the Test of Competence because of pregnancy they should contact the NMC for advice.

If a candidate is unhappy with the Test Centre's decision they can appeal or complain (whichever is most appropriate) to the Test Centre Manager who will refer all complaints or appeals to the appropriate University body.

## **7. Equality & Diversity Advisor**

7.1 If, at any stage, the Test Centre Manager would like some assistance in thinking through the practical implications of an individual pregnancy, they should contact the University's Equality and Diversity Advisor.

7.2 Senior Managers

The Test Centre Manager may also wish to consult their Line Manager or other Senior Managers at the University.

7.3 Occupational Health and Safety Office.

The Test Centre Manager may also wish to consult the Occupational Health and Safety Office for advice on health and safety issues including risk assessments.

7.4 The University will also consider flexibility for a candidate who has recently become a parent. As above, what constitutes a reasonable degree of flexibility to take account of a candidate's caring/parental responsibilities may vary for particular circumstances.

## **8. Small babies/children on campus**

8.1 Small babies and children are **not allowed** in the Test Centre at any time. Partners and relatives are **not allowed** in the Test Centre at any time.

8.2 Candidates may be accompanied by children in general public areas such as the restaurants, and in the library, providing that children are supervised by the parent at all times and they are not disruptive to others. It is particularly important that children are not brought into areas where there is the possibility of a risk to health and safety. The University cannot accept any liability for the child in these circumstances.

8.3 There are no restrictions on breast feeding. If additional support is required for breastfeeding whilst candidates are in the Innovation Centre, candidates should contact the Test Centre Manager, prior to their OSCE date.



## COMPETENCE TEST CENTRE

### Confidentiality Agreement and Declaration

**This sheet must be completed and returned to Reception on day of your OSCE.**

<b>Candidate Name (Print):</b>			
<b>Candidate Number:</b>			
<b>Date of OSCE:</b>			
<b>CANDIDATE DECLARATION</b>			
(Please read and initial each point to confirm the following) <b>I hereby agree:</b>			
1	That I will not communicate or discuss any elements of the NMC's OSCE examination, facilitated by the University of Northampton to a third party, except my OSCE feedback, which I am permitted to share with my employer, sponsor or my educational supervisor.		
2	That I will not share, or have not shared, my log in details to any other party to give access to University of Northampton information that relates to the NMC's OSCE examination.		
3	That I will not forward any examination material or information about the examination from the University of Northampton to a third party.		
4	That I will act in a professional manner at all times and seek advice from Test Centre staff when on University property, if a query arises.		
5	That I am fit and well to undertake the OSCE and have declared (if appropriate) any request(s) for reasonable adjustment prior to my OSCE examination.		
6	That in the Assessment station, if the patient is compromised this station can be stopped		
7	It is a contractual requirement with NMC that we retain all video and examination documentation from each candidate for a minimum of 7 years post their examination.		
<b>I declare that the information given is true and that I am willing to answer further questions if necessary.</b>			
In order to quality assure OSCEs across the NMC Competence Test Centres in the UK, it is necessary to share OSCE data, including paperwork and video data associated with a candidate's exam, with the other Competence Test Centres (Ulster University and Oxford Brookes University) for the purposes of moderation. This is done securely using OneDrive. Please sign, date and print your name below to consent to the sharing of your OSCE test data with the other Universities for this purpose.			
<b>Candidate's Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
Please sign below if you agree that University of Northampton staff can contact you following your OSCE for research purposes. The research will explore candidates' experience of the NMC Test of Competence journey.			
I agree I can be contacted by the University of Northampton regarding continuing professional development opportunities.			
<b>Candidate's Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

Please sign below if you agree that the CTC Manager can contact your OSCE preparation training team to provide constructive feedback on your performance if you were unsuccessful in your OSCE. The purpose of feedback is so that your OSCE preparation training team can help you prepare for your re-sit.

<b>Candidate's Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Email Address (print):</b>			