

Catherine McAuley, School of Nursing & Midwifery and Participating Health Service Providers

CLINICAL PRACTICE PLACEMENT GUIDELINES for BSc Undergraduate Students

Authors: Dr Aileen Burton, Vice Dean for Undergraduate Clinical Practice Education in conjunction with Staff in both the School of Nursing & Midwifery and Participating Health Service Partners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Clinical practice placement forms an integral part of the BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery programmes representing 50% of the undergraduate programme. These programmes are offered in partnership with participating Health Service Providers, who provide the clinical practice placements for students. This booklet provides general information and guidance on aspects of clinical practice placements related to these programmes for students, Preceptors, Clinical Placement Co-Ordinator's, Allocation Liaison Officers, Link Lecturers, Practice Module Leads and Programme Directors and others involved in these programmes. Furthermore, the booklet offers information and guidance on the role and function of the relevant personnel associated with students' clinical placements; general information for students on practice placements; guidance on professional behaviour; information on the process of student allocation to clinical placements; as well as requirements/expectations of students attending clinical practice placements.

The information and guidance offered in this booklet are mainly of a generic nature. The booklet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by the individual Health Service Providers. In all cases, students are advised to follow both local Health Service Provider and School of Nursing and Midwifery policies for more specific information.

Students in the first instance are also advised to contact the Programme Director/Practice Module Lead for more detailed information and guidance if they are unsure about certain aspects of their clinical practice placement or have any queries with regards these guidelines.

2. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AO:	Allocations Officer
ALO:	Allocation Liaison Officer
BH:	Bank Holiday
CAD	Competency Assessment Document
CAT	Competency Assessment Tool
CNM/CMM:	Clinical Nurse Manager/Clinical Midwifery Manager
CPC:	Clinical Placement Co-ordinator
CDC:	Clinical Development Co-ordinator
DOHC:	Department of Health and Children
DON/DOM:	Director of Nursing/Director of Midwifery
GP:	General Practitioner
HSP:	Health Service Provider

LL:	Link Lecturer
NMBI:	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
N/MPDC:	Nursing/ Midwifery Practice Development Co-ordinator
OHD:	Occupational Health Department
PREP	Protected Reflection Education on Practice
SLP:	Supportive Learning Plan
SoNM:	School of Nursing and Midwifery
UCC:	University College Cork
TMS:	Time Management System

3. PRACTICE PLACEMENTS

3.1 General Information

Clinical practice placements must meet the Requirements and Standards for Nurse (NMBI, 2023) and Midwifery (NMBI, 2016) Registration Education Programmes. The prime focus for a student's clinical placement should always be to facilitate and maximise learning and to provide learning opportunities which enable the achievement of the learning competencies.

There are two kinds of clinical practice placement learning experience: (1) Supernumerary Practice Placement in years one, two, three and four of the programmes and (2) Internship Practice Placement in year 4 (and year 5 of the Children's and General Integrated programme only).

3.2 Clinical Placement Weeks and Hours

Students on the Nursing/Midwifery programme are required to complete a certain minimum of clinical practice placement weeks. Please see Table 1 below for outline of BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery Programme weeks/hours.

The normal supernumerary clinical practice placement week consists of **35 hours** Monday to Friday (30 hours' clinical contact and 5 hours' reflective time). Students are expected to attend early, and late shifts as stipulated by the custom and practice of the clinical placement area. Students must complete at least one night duty shift during their internship to complete a 24-hour cycle of care. Students will have practice placement experiences on 6, 7, 8, or 12 hour shifts as stipulated by the normal shift pattern of the assigned clinical area and available learning opportunities. It may also be necessary to re-allocate students to other areas so that they can get appropriate learning experience of a procedure or service, or in some instances to protect students from an outbreak of a contagious illness/disease.

Note: Please see Point 3.6 for further information on placement during Weekends, Bank Holidays and Night Duty for Supernumerary students

Table 1. BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery Programmes: Weeks/Hours

	Supernumerary Hours per Week	Supernumerary: Weeks	Internship: Weeks	Total No of Weeks
BSc Nursing (General, Mental Health and Intellectual Disability)	35 30 Contact + 5 Reflection	45	36	81
BSc Children's & General Integrated	35 30 Contact + 5 Reflection	59 Years (1-4)	36 Year 4 / 5	95
BSc Midwifery	35 30 Contact + 5 Reflection	47	36	83

3.3 Preparation for Practice Placement: Supernumerary Students

Students must attend the preparation for clinical practice placement sessions as stipulated by the SoNM. These preparation sessions are run jointly by the SoNM and the relevant HSP. The preparation sessions aim to provide specific information to students relevant to their placement, year of programme, level of learning, responsibilities for learning and clinical assessment. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory and monitored.

Prior to undertaking clinical practice placement and throughout the BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery Programme, there are compulsory elements and mandatory skills that all students must complete to attend and participate in clinical nursing and midwifery practice. This is to ensure the continuity of good quality and safe nursing and midwifery practice in all healthcare settings for students, patients/clients and others. SoNM and HSPs must be satisfied that students have completed the following:

- UCC Student registration
- Garda Vetting (and international police clearance as relevant)
- Fitness to Practice Self Disclosure form and any subsequent follow up
- Participation in the Vaccination Programme as required.
- NMBI candidate registration

- Mandatory Training Requirements
- Signing of Practice Placement Agreement

Please note that if any of the above is incomplete, then an undergraduate nursing or midwifery student **will not be permitted** to attend clinical placement. Completing missed time due to the incompleteness of any of the above will have to be negotiated with the Allocations Officer in the SoNM. Please note that the repayment of time can take place during the summer vacation period.

3.4 Reflective Time (Hours): Supernumerary students

As outlined in Table 1 above, in addition to the 30 hours of clinical contact time, each student has **5 hours** of reflective time per week or during their supernumerary status (in years one, two, three and four), which is spent outside the clinical placement area. This reflective time must be used for writing reflective notes or reviewing literature/policies relating to the clinical area. The 5 reflective hours will be added to the student's overall practice learning hours by the Allocations Office. Students must record the content of their reflective time (5 hours for each week) in their Clinical Assessment Document/Tool. Please refer to the Clinical Assessment Document/Tool for more specific information on reflection notes and reflective time as part of your clinical practice module.

3.5 Attendance in Clinical Practice: Supernumerary students

Students must attend their practice placement as scheduled, which means being available for placement from Monday to Friday inclusive (except BHs). Students are expected to be punctual and to report to the CNM/Nurse-in-Charge/CMM/Midwife-in-Charge and Preceptor at the beginning of their shift. Where there is poor timekeeping, the Preceptor should discuss this with the student in the first instance and then, if necessary, with the CPC/Link Lecturer/Practice Module Leader. If poor timekeeping persists, the ALO/CPC should report it to the Allocations Office immediately. This may lead to disciplinary action as per the SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements

Disciplinary:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesproceduresandguidelines/JointDisciplinaryPolicy.pdf>.

Students must not alter/swap or otherwise change the dates or times/shifts for a placement without the approval of the AO/ALO/CPC as appropriate. Should a student wish to change the times allocated to a placement area, they must first discuss this issue with the relevant personnel in the practice area (CPC/CDC). Requests will be considered on an individual basis; multiple requests may not always be facilitated due to student numbers in the area and/or learning need, whereby the student would work alongside their Preceptor for the maximum amount of time.

3.6 Weekends, Bank Holidays and Night Duty: Supernumerary students

3.6.1 Weekends

Students are not expected to have practice placement experiences at weekends during supernumerary clinical placement, unless they (*the student*) specifically want to gain an experience which only occurs at that time, have caring responsibilities or they are making-up practice placement hours (*to a maximum of 12 hours in any week*). This can only be conducted/organized pending prior agreement with the CPC, CDC, CNM/CMM and Preceptor.

Requests relating to the above from supernumerary students in years 2, 3 and 4 will be considered on a case-by-case basis in clinical areas that have CPC support available Monday to Friday only. Additionally, it is only applicable for placement areas where appropriate learning and support is available. It may not be possible to accommodate students receiving additional learning supports at weekends. There is no CPC or link lecturer support available to students during weekends.

3.6.2 Bank Holidays

Students are **not** allocated practice placement experiences on Bank Holidays. Bank Holidays must be recorded as 6 hours on the student's timesheet/TMS (see point 3.7 below), leaving the student with 24 hours of clinical contact time (+ 5 reflective hours) during a placement week in which a Bank Holiday falls. The requirements for reflective hours are unchanged by a Bank Holiday.

3.6.3 Night Duty

Students are advised to refer to the "*Night Duty Guidelines for Supernumerary Placements for BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery Students*" on the SoNM website for specific information and guidance on night duty, please see clinical related documents at this link under heading Practice Placement Policies, Procedures and Guidelines:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bscnursemid/>.

3.7 Timesheet Management System (TMS) - Recording of Clinical Hours: Supernumerary students

The TMS is a record of all hours (attendance and absence) during a supernumerary placement period. Hours are recorded under the following categories:

- Clinical placement hours
- Medically certified sick leave
- Uncertified sick leave
- Accounted absence (i.e. special leave for jury service, compassionate leave)
- Unaccounted absence
- Bank Holidays
- Made up time

The student is responsible and accountable for the **accurate completion** of the timesheets on TMS. Accuracy of timesheets will be verified with placement sites by the Allocations Office. Students must submit their timesheets **on a weekly basis** (please see TMS Guidelines for details on how to complete and submit your timesheet on TMS at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/>

Failure to submit a timesheet as outlined above will result in the lack of an official record of placement attendance. This may result in the student being asked to complete the practice placement time again, the current placement being suspended and any future placements withheld. Students may also be subjected to action under the SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesproceduresandguidelines/JointDisciplinaryPolicy.pdf>.

This will impact on a student's ability to pass and progress for the relevant year of the programme. Furthermore, it may result in a delay in the payment of travel/accommodation allowances. Please refer to the relevant clinical placement module in the UCC Book of Modules "*Pass Standard and any Special Requirements for Passing Module*" <https://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/modules/> and for specific information on timesheets on the SoNM website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/>

3.8 Absenteeism: Supernumerary and Internship Students

Absenteeism is only accepted in **exceptional** circumstances. A student who does not turn up for a scheduled placement will be considered absent. However, if a student is unable to be present for the placement due to illness, a doctor's certificate with their timesheet should be submitted electronically to the Allocations Office, School of Nursing & Midwifery. The doctor's certificate should include dates of when the student is medically fit to return to placement. Students will not be allowed on clinical placement until they are deemed medically fit to resume clinical practice by their doctor or the Occupational Health Department (OHD) and there is evidence of same in writing. Please note that if the reason for illness is serious/has health and safety implications, a fitness to return to work in addition to a medical certificate is required. Where a student has absent hours recorded, the student will not meet the practice requirement hours for the clinical practice module. This will have implications for pass and progression to the next academic year. However, if a student has absence due to certified illness or other approved leave then the student will be facilitated to complete the required hours prior to the next examination board or supplemental examination board where relevant. Making up time is subject to clinical placement capacity.

Absenteeism falls under four categories as follows:

1. Medically Certified Sick Leave
2. Uncertified Sick Leave
3. Accounted Absence
4. Unaccounted Absence

3.8.1 Sick Leave

Each HSP has its own policy/guidelines/algorithm in relation to reporting sickness. It is imperative that the student is familiar with the relevant policy/guidelines/algorithm and follow the appropriate channels of communication when unable to attend the clinical practice placement due to illness.

3.8.2 Medically Certified Sick Leave

Medically certified sick leave is a period of sickness/illness/injury, which is evidenced by a relevant medical certificate.

3.8.3 Medical Certificates

Students should submit a medical certificate to the Allocations Office in the SoNM in all cases of sick leave. The medical certificate must be emailed to the Allocations Office. Failure to submit a medical certificate will result in the absence being recorded as uncertified sick leave by the Allocations Office. Students should follow local HSP policy in relation to medically certified sick leave during their internship year. Students should be advised to keep a copy of certification for their own records.

3.8.4 Uncertified Sick Leave

Uncertified Sick Leave is a period of sickness/illness/injury where the student has informed the relevant personnel that they are sick/ill/injured but does not subsequently support this with a relevant medical certificate. In cases of persistent uncertified sick leave, the Allocations Office in SoNM will alert the relevant Programme Director who will contact the student to discuss the situation and take appropriate action.

3.8.5 Accounted Absence

Accounted absence is a period of absence other than sick leave where the student has informed the relevant personnel of the circumstances preventing him/her attending practice placement e.g. compassionate leave. In addition to the guidance above, each HSP has its own policies/guidelines in relation to accounted absence and reporting to the clinical area. The student should be familiar with the relevant policy/guidelines and follow the appropriate channels of communication when unable to attend the practice placement due to accounted absence.

3.8.6 Unaccounted Absence

Unaccounted Absence is absence where the student fails to inform the placement area. Unaccounted absence is considered unprofessional behaviour, and reflects negatively on the student's professionalism, ability to communicate, and respect for others. The CPC/ALO should discuss unaccounted absence with the student in the first instance and, if persistent, should report to the PML and AO (SoNM) immediately.

This may lead to activation of the SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements :<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesproceduresandguidelines/JointDisciplinaryPolicy.pdf>

3.8.7 Returning from absence

When the student is ready to return to the practice placement area, they must notify the relevant personnel when they will return, as per local HSP policy.

3.9 Make-up Time and Supplemental/Repeat Placement Time: Supernumerary and Internship Students

3.9.1 Make-up Time Hours/Weeks

If a student has not met the required specified practice placement hours/weeks for the relevant year of the programme (e.g. missed time through sickness or other absence) they are required to make up the hours/weeks in the appropriate setting before or after the relevant exam board has been completed subject to clinical capacity. This is to ensure students make up the relevant hours and weeks to meet the requirements for each year of the programme and for NMBI registration as a nurse/midwife at the end of the programme. Where a student is short hours/weeks due to absence from clinical placement, the Allocations Office in the SoNM and ALO/CPC (where applicable) will advise the student how, when and where they can 'make up/repay' the outstanding clinical placement hours/weeks. It cannot be guaranteed when students can be facilitated to make up practice placement hours due to placement capacity issues therefore students with certified sick leave will be prioritised if placement shortages (weeks/hours) occur. `

Students must never condense made up time into shorter periods (e.g., two 30-hour weeks into one 60-hour week). This would result in students not completing the minimum weeks assigned by the NMBI and will result in students having to complete this time again.

NB. Supernumerary students must not attempt to make up time without the knowledge and/or advice of the Allocations Office in the SoNM and ALO as appropriate

If a student completes time without the knowledge and/or advice of the Allocations Office in the SoNM and ALO as appropriate, this time will not be counted as make up time and students will be required to make-up the time again.

3.9.2 Recording Make-up Time

Once it has been agreed how the student will make up missed clinical practice placement weeks/hours (in any year of the BSc programme), it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the time is completed, and timesheets (TMS) submitted as outlined in section 3.7. The student must submit timesheets for their making up time immediately upon completion of the making-up time placement.

Students making up time due to previous absences will have a 'make-up time placement' organised by the Allocations Office (SoNM) and the ALO (HSP) If placement is in their respective parent site (e.g. HORIZONS, CUH, etc.) or by the Allocations Office (SoNM) if it's an external placement category i.e. community. The student must attend the 'make-up time placement' as arranged. Only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. certified leave) will a student be given any further opportunity to make up the outstanding placement time; otherwise, no further opportunity will be provided. Non-attendance will

have implications for pass and progression to the next academic year. Students may also be required to meet and report such absences to their respective Practice Module Lead.

3.9.3 Supplemental/Repeat Placement Time to Achieve Outstanding Competencies

Students given repeat placement time to achieve competencies will have a placement organised between the Programme Directors/Practice Module Lead in conjunction with the AO/AOs (SoNM) and the ALO in their respective parent site (e.g. HORIZONS, CUH, etc.). Repeat time is only scheduled when there is a clinical learning shortfall. The student must attend the placement as arranged. No further opportunities will be provided to achieve competencies. Non-attendance will have implications for pass and progression to the next academic year.

3.9.4 Time Out for Personal Appointments

Students should arrange any personal appointments (e.g. dentist, doctor, other) during their time off. Where this is not possible, any clinical practice placement hours missed because of having to attend an appointment will have to be made up.

NB: Students are **not permitted** to arrange/book holidays during clinical placement blocks.

3.10 Break Times: Supernumerary Students

Placement Duration	Breaks
6-hour placement:	30 minutes break
8-hour placement:	30 minutes + 30 minutes break
12-hour placement:	30 minutes + 60 minutes + 30 minutes break

It is recognized that on some occasions, for example PHN/Community Nurse/Community Midwife placements that this may not be feasible when a student is travelling with a Preceptor. For other placement durations, breaks are pro rata.

4. ALLOCATING AND ORGANISING CLINICAL PRACTICE PLACEMENTS

4.1 Clinical Placement Allocation

Students are allocated to placement areas depending on the programme they are studying (i.e. BSc Nursing General, Intellectual Disability, Mental Health, Children's and General Integrated, or BSc Midwifery), the clinical placement experiences required for the programme, and the availability of clinical placement areas.

4.2 Allocations Officer (AO)/ Assistant Allocations Officers (AAOs): Role and Function

The AO/AAOs are responsible for organising clinical placements for nursing/midwifery students, in conjunction with the ALOs in the participating HSPs and other relevant agencies. The AO/AAOs are responsible for the effective and efficient organisation of student's clinical placements. They are also responsible for recording and updating records of each student's clinical placement hours. This is to ensure that each student meets the BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery programme requirements as well as the professional requirements for registration as a Nurse/Midwife with NMBI.

4.3 Allocations Office in the SoNM

The Allocations Office in the SoNM is open between 9.15am and 1pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours the staff are available by telephone or email to discuss issues relating to placements. Contact details are available on the SONM website (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/>).

The Allocations Office works closely with ALOs and other relevant staff in the SoNM and HSP representatives to ensure that appropriate clinical placements are utilised and to resolve placement issues such as placement cancellations, lack of placement availability, and placement suitability.

4.4 Allocation Liaison Officer (ALO)

The role of the ALO is to facilitate the clinical placements of undergraduate BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery students in clinical sites in partnership with the Allocations Office in UCC.

They also co-ordinate issues involving Health Clearance/Occupational Health/ vaccinations and payment of clinical placement allowances where applicable. The ALO liaises and communicates on a regular basis with the Allocations Office in the SoNM and with other relevant personnel within the SoNM. The ALO, in collaboration with the Allocation Office, assists in monitoring the attendance of students on clinical placements and facilitates the making up of time.

The ALO liaises with the Personnel Department of the respective HSP to organise the preparation of contracts for students, particulars of office, and for each internship student to be set up for payment on commencement of their internship placement.

4.5 Availability of Clinical Placement Information

Placement allocations are located on the 'Allocations Information' section of the SoNM website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/placementinfo/>. The Allocations Office aims to display students' placements at least four to six weeks prior to their commencement. Placements are often subject to late changes due to several factors (e.g. capacity, ward/unit issues, student learning issues, etc.). Therefore, it is essential that students check placement details regularly.

If necessary, students may also be contacted via their UCC e-mail address, text message or phone regarding placement issues. **Hence, it is crucial that students also check their UCC student email address regularly and keep mobile phone and address details up to date. It is recommended that students have their voicemail activated on their mobile phones.** Students must notify the Allocations Office and ALO of any change to contact details. Practice placement details and relevant supporting material, e.g. rosters for certain areas, are posted in the Allocations Information section of the SoNM website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/placementinfo/>.

4.6 ARC Web

Access to placement information is enabled by the integrated 'ARC Web' system on the SoNM website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/placementinfo/>. This system provides web-based access to the central allocations record system. It provides the student with all their past, current, and planned placements on an individual basis. The student will also be able to view their record of absenteeism and made-up time to date. Access to the Timesheet Management System (TMS) is also available within this section of ARCweb.

4.7 Changing Clinical Placement Allocations

Only in very **exceptional** circumstances may a placement allocation be changed. Once the placement notification has been issued, students should contact the Allocations Office in the SoNM within 3 working days of receiving their placement details, if they have a concern in relation to their allocation. The Allocations Office will consider each concern on an individual basis.

4.8 Contacting the Clinical Placement Area

Details on how to contact each placement site can be located in the 'My Placements (ARCweb)' <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/placementinfo/>. Students will have access to a variety of placement area information including the following:

- Placement area name
- Contact person for the placement area
- Telephone number of the placement area
- Link Lecturer for the placement area

Students should follow the details for contacting their assigned placement area as outlined in ARCweb. This can be done by ensuring that you check the **'How do I obtain my roster/schedule for this placement area'** section for the exact procedure for each placement area. Any concerns at this stage should be immediately referred to the Allocations Office in the SoNM or the ALO, HSP, who will then have time to address these concerns **before** the commencement of your placement. Students may be required to contact the CPC/CDC assigned to their placement area, (please check with your HSP). Note: CPCs/CDCs are not assigned to all clinical placement areas. Internship students must follow the relevant HSP protocol for contacting clinical placement areas also.

Note: Students are strongly advised to record 'in case of emergency (ICE)' contact details on the ARC system, details on how to do so will be provided by the Allocations Office. It is also advisable that students inform their 'in case of emergency' contact person of the contact details of the practice placement area in case they need to contact you (the student) urgently during your clinical placement. Students should also complete ICE contact details for use in case of an emergency in their CAD/CAT documents.

4.9 Clinical Placement Enquiries

Staff in the Allocations Office (SoNM) are available to answer any questions regarding scheduling of placements and dates of attendance at email: nursmidallocations@ucc.ie.

4.10 Travel/Accommodation Allowance: Supernumerary Students

The diversity of placement requirements and geographical spread of placements sites means that travelling to placements will be expected throughout the duration of the programme. This may also entail overnight stays, utilising accommodation in closer proximity to the assigned placement site. Typically travel will be within the Munster region. This is to ensure that the programme the student has registered for meets the required clinical instruction, set out by the NMBI (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland).

Typically travel will be within the Munster region. Some of our clinical partners include, but are not limited to, Mallow General Hospital (MGH), University Hospital Kerry (UHK), University Hospital Waterford (UHW) and Tipperary University Hospital (TUH), University Hospital Limerick (UHL). There are also several elective placement opportunities in Dublin and with our Erasmus partners throughout Europe.

Information pertaining to placement travel and allowance is available in the Allocation Information section of the SoNM website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/pltravel/>.

For current details on payment in relation to travel and accommodation allowances please contact the relevant ALO in the HSP.

5. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 Professional Responsibility

Students must adhere to the conduct and guidelines set out in their Practice Placement Agreement, and the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives Incorporating the Scope of Practice and Professional Guidance (NMBI, 2025) and all other practice placement policies. Practice Placement Policies, Procedures and Guidelines are outlined at this link on SONM website: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/>. Students are also advised to be familiar with UCC policies pertaining to students.

5.1.1 Student and Patient/Client Relationship

The relationship between the student, patient/client and their families must remain professional. Please review the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives Incorporating the Scope of Practice and Professional Guidance (NMBI, 2025):

<https://www.nmbi.ie/NMBI/media/NMBI/NMBI-Code-of-Professional-Conduct-and-Ethics.pdf?ext=.pdf>

5.1.2 Confidentiality (Inclusive of GDPR & Social Media)

During a practice placement experience, students may have access to records/information concerning the medical and/or personal details of patients/clients, staff, or other confidential HSP information. Such records/information are strictly confidential, and confidentiality must be maintained. HSPs have specific policies about what information can be given to whom and by whom, and the student should be familiar with these policies. Information regarding patients'/clients' medical notes etc. may only be discussed with relevant healthcare personnel, in the context of the student's learning. Patient/client records must never be left where an unauthorised person can access them. At the end of a clinical placement shift, any notes containing patient details, medical and/or personal details of patients/clients, staff, or other confidential HSP information (e.g. handover notes) recorded by the student for their own use during clinical placement must be either shredded on site or placed in a HSP confidentiality bin for shredding at a later date. Issues around confidentiality should be addressed with the Preceptor/CPC/CDC/Link Lecturer/Practice Module Lead. All undergraduate nursing and midwifery students are required to complete the **Fundamentals of GDPR Learning Module** on www.HSEland.ie

Students should be careful not to share their specific personal details with patients, e.g. phone numbers, addresses, social media accounts, etc. Any module assignments directly related to the placement should maintain confidentiality and anonymity for both staff and patients/clients and of the practice area. For some module assignments (e.g. case studies) the student will be required to engage with the patient/client. In such cases the permission must first be sought and granted from the CNM/CMM/Preceptor/CPC and then the patient/client or family member by the student prior to consultation.

Students when engaging in **social media and social networking** must always act professionally and keep posts positive in addition to patient or person free. Students must respect patient's privacy and confidentiality. They must protect their professionalism and reputation. Students are advised to keep their personal and professional life separate. Students are also advised to check their privacy settings and respect the privacy of others. They are advised to consider the implications of what they are posting. Students must avoid posting in haste or anger or responding to other posts in haste. Students must review NMBI's guidance on social media: <https://www.nmbi.ie/NMBI/media/NMBI/NMBI-Code-of-Professional-Conduct-and-Ethics.pdf?ext=.pdf>.

Failure to comply with this guidance will result in invoking the SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesproceduresandguidelines/JointDisciplinaryPolicy.pdf>

5.1.3 Documentation

Documentation must never be removed from the practice placement area. Confidential bins are available for disposal of handover sheets. If care plans, policies and procedures and/or other patient/client documentation are required by students for module assignments, permission must always be obtained from the relevant CNM/CMM about using this documentation, and a pseudonym must be used instead of the patient's/client's real name.

5.1.4 Accompanying/Escorting Patients/Clients

Day trips, outings and transfers occur in some areas, and students may join these if the experience is helpful to their learning. However, the student should always be considered as an addition to the registered nursing or midwifery staff and should at no time be left in a position of responsibility for patients/clients. In certain HSP areas, a student may be allowed to accompany a patient/client on shopping trips or to a clinic and must be given specific instructions. Students should also refer to local HSP policies in relation to accompanying/escorting patients/clients.

5.1.5 Mobile Phones

Mobile phones must be switched off while in the practice placement area. Students should also refer to local HSP policy in relation to mobile phones.

5.1.6 Gifts

Students should not accept any gifts or favours from patients, healthcare and pharmaceutical companies. Students should refer to Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives Incorporating the Scope of Practice and Professional Guidance (NMBI, 2025).

5.1.7 Student Behaviour

Where a Preceptor/CPC/CDC feels that a student's behaviour is giving cause for concern, one or both of the following actions may be taken:

1. The issue will be discussed with the student and, if necessary, the CNM/CMM and the Practice Module Lead.

2. If the matter remains unresolved, appropriate senior personnel in the HSP and SoNM will be made aware of the situation and SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements may be invoked

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesproceduresandguidelines/JointDisciplinaryPolicy.pdf>

This can be documented in the additional page interview in the CAD/CAT document.

A CNM/CMM and/or CPC/CDC reserves the right to instruct a student to leave the practice placement area immediately and the student will not be allowed to return until the issue has been discussed and resolved. Allocations office in the SoNM to be informed immediately.

5.1.8 Staff Behaviour

Where a student feels that the behaviour of a member of staff is giving cause for concern, the student should discuss this immediately with the Preceptor/CPC/CDC or CNM/CMM or their Practice Module Lead, whichever the student deems appropriate. If the student feels that the matter has not been dealt with appropriately, they may wish to consider discussing with PML/PD & N/MPDC. Students can also review the Grievance Policy for Students on Practice Placements, a policy jointly agreed by the SoNM UCC and the participating Health Service Providers, please see document at this link under heading Practice Placement Policies, Procedures and Guidelines: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bscnursemid/>.

5.1.9 Patient/Client/Visitor Behaviour

If a student feels that a patient's, client's or visitor's behaviour is giving cause for concern (e.g. verbal abuse, sexual/racial harassment or physical aggression), they should discuss this immediately with the Preceptor/CNM/CMM/ CPC/CDC as relevant or their Practice Module Lead as appropriate.

5.2 Personal Responsibility

5.2.1 Dress Code

Students should familiarise themselves with the HSP's dress code prior to commencement of the practice placement and adhere to this dress code during the placement. Clothing/uniform should be in accordance with this policy. Students should also take note of the following guidelines:

- A student's appropriate dress and appearance support a perception of personal and professional integrity. This can have a direct effect on a student's relationship with patients/clients and colleagues, as well as on the nursing or midwifery care provided. Appropriate dress and appearance help to reduce the risk of cross-infection and maintain staff and patient/client safety.
- Students should avoid dressing in any way that could be seen as inappropriate. Excessive makeup; tanning product; fake nails; wearing jewellery (including body piercings) and false eyelashes must be avoided.

- Any student considered by the CNM/CMM/Preceptor/CPC to be inappropriately dressed may be asked to leave the practice placement area (*Allocations Office in SoNM to be informed immediately if a student is asked to leave*), and in such cases will be reported absent until they return appropriately dressed. Any such absences may need to be made up. If a student is inappropriately dressed on a persistent basis, the Practice Module Leader/Programme Director will be informed, and this may lead to activation of Joint Disciplinary Policy.
- Students must change their uniforms daily, to reduce the risk of cross-infection. Uniforms must be clean and ironed, with a spare uniform always kept in the student's locker. Uniforms should not be altered, unless for legitimate purposes.
- Uniforms must **never** be worn outside of the placement environment, as per HSP infection control policy. Breach of policy will result in the activation of the Joint Disciplinary Policy.
- For specific community placements where a uniform is not required (e.g. Public Health Nursing), then a student must adhere to a smart casual dress code (neat, tidy & professional). Examples of inappropriate clothing while not exhaustive include low cut tops, short dresses, jeans, hoodies, tracksuits or leggings.
 - A student's religious beliefs regarding dress will be treated sensitively and any special requirements will be discussed on an individual basis with the CPC/ALO and agreed with the Programme Director, N/MPDC and Director of Nursing/Midwifery. All arrangements must conform to Health and Safety Regulations, particularly in relation to infection control and patient handling guidelines.
- The values and religious/cultural beliefs of patients/clients in relation to dress should be recognised and respected.

5.2.2 Fitness to Practice

If a student has or develops an impairment or condition, it is their responsibility to declare the impairment or condition on the relevant self-disclosure form on registration. It is also their responsibility to seek advice regarding the possibility that it may impact on their ability to learn, to perform safely in the clinical environment, or affect their personal welfare or the welfare of others. If a student wishes to seek advice on this, they can email: Nursmidallocations@ucc.ie.

It is only through disclosure of an impairment/condition can appropriate support to reach required clinical learning outcomes/competencies be explored. If supports are put in place the HEI may need to disclose this information (i.e. DSS/Occupational Health recommendations) to the relevant HSP personnel.

Preceptors or Health Care Professional who observe an impairment/condition/concern may contact and inform the relevant personnel in the HEI.

5.2.3 Personal Hygiene

Attention to a high standard of personal hygiene/cleanliness is essential. If a student has lesions or wounds, these should be medically treated and covered appropriately before entering the practice placement area. Any concerns should be discussed with the Preceptor/CPC/CDC.

5.2.4 Name Badges

For security reasons, only the photo/identity badges issued by UCC and the HSP must be worn, and be visible, while on the practice placement area.

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INTERNSHIP STUDENTS

6.1 Contract of Employment with HSP

Please refer to the terms of employment/contract, policy documents, and other guidelines issued by the relevant HSP.

6.2 Practice Placement Hours

Practice placements consist of a 37.5-hour week, and students are rostered as salaried staff during internship clinical placement. See local HSP and HSE policies and guidelines for full details.

6.3 Reflective Time

In accordance with recommendations of the Nursing Education Forum (Government of Ireland, 2000), rostered students during their internship year undertake Protected Reflection Education on Practice time (PREP). This protected time is divided between on-ward/on-unit and off-ward/off-unit based activities and arranged by HSP in conjunction with SoNM staff.

6.4 Annual Leave (excluding Bank Holidays)

Annual leave entitlements during the internship period are subject to Department of Health recommendations and students will be advised of these when the information is available. All requests for annual leave must be made well in advance to the ALO, as annual leave arrangements are determined both by service as well as by student needs. There is no guarantee that all annual leave requests can be facilitated, hence students should not finalise travel arrangements (flights/sailing) until they receive confirmation that leave has been granted.

6.5 Public Holidays

The entitlement of students on internship placement to the benefit of any public holidays is determined by the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997) and the arrangements which already apply to nurses and midwives working in the public health service.

6.6 Absence /Sick leave

Students should follow local HSP policy in relation to medically certified sick leave during their internship year. Each HSP has its own policies/guidelines in relation to reporting absence/sickness. The student should be familiar with the relevant policies/guidelines and follow the appropriate channels of communication when unable to attend the practice placement due to sickness/other. The original medical certificate must be submitted to the HSP. Failure to submit a copy of the medical certificate will result in the absence being recorded as uncertified sick leave by the ALO. When the student is ready to return to the practice placement area, they must notify the relevant personnel when they will return, as per local HSP policy.

6.7 Timesheets and Making Up Time

Students making up time at the end of the internship year must complete the relevant timesheet.

7. STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION FOR BOTH SUPERNUMERARY AND INTERNSHIP STUDENTS

7.1 Preceptor

Students will be assigned a named Preceptor/Associate Preceptor during clinical practice placement. A Preceptor is a registered nurse or registered midwife who has undertaken preparation for the role and who supports undergraduate nursing or midwifery students in their learning in the practice setting and assumes the role of supervisor and assessor of the students' achievement of clinical learning outcomes and competencies.

Some practice placement areas will, in addition, allocate an Associate Preceptor to the student. An Associate Preceptor covers in the absence of the Preceptor. Every attempt should be made to match the shift patterns of the Preceptor to those of the student.

In certain specific placement areas (e.g. Intellectual Disabilities, Social Services, Nurseries, Schools, Residential Homes) the Preceptor/Associate Preceptor may not hold a professional nursing/midwifery or public health nursing qualification. However, the Preceptor/Associate Preceptor will have, wherever possible, a relevant professional qualification. In most cases, the student assessment will be undertaken in the presence of a qualified nurse/midwife.

Supervisors on non-nurse-led practice placements are required to:

- Provide learning opportunities to the nursing student in line with specific practice placement learning outcomes.
- Supervise the nursing students and indicate when specific learning outcomes have been achieved or not achieved.
- The CPC /link Lecturer / practitioner registered with NMBI is responsible for the final assessment of the student in consultation with the supervisor.

7.1.1 Role and Responsibilities of the Preceptor /Associate Preceptor

The Preceptors/Associate Preceptors provide guidance and support to the student while on practice placement. The Preceptors/Associate Preceptors should be supported by the CPC and/or Link Academic Staff regarding the student's competences while on practice placement.

The Preceptor is required to:

- Be a registered practitioner with NMBI.
- Have experience in the area of clinical practice.
- Have completed a teaching and assessing course approved by NMBI and updates in line with local policy.
- Maintain undergraduate students' supernumerary status.
- Ensure the student is orientated to the practice placement area and practice placement learning outcomes on the first day of placement.
- Agree on specific practice placement learning outcomes at the preliminary interview. This must occur within the first two days of placement.
- Supervise, organise, coordinate and evaluate appropriate student learning activities in the practice placement area and provide feedback as required.
- Provide learning opportunities that will fulfil the learning requirements.
- Conduct preliminary, mid-placement (where applicable) and final interviews.
- Guide reflective practice with undergraduate students.
- Ensure the implementation of protected time for reflective practice every week.
- Ask questions to determine the student's ability to link theory to practice towards the provision of safe and effective evidence-based care.
- Provide evidence of the student's achievement or the lack of achievement as required by the HEI.
- Provide students, if required, with additional learning supports in a timely manner, in line with HEI policy.
- Ensure that the National Competence Assessment Document/ Competency Assessment Tool is completed in line with the HEI policy.

If the Preceptor/Associate Preceptor is not available to supervise the student, it is the responsibility of the nurse/midwife in charge of the shift to assign another member of staff to supervise the student.

Preceptors/Associate Preceptors are responsible for the assessment of student learning in practice. They work in partnership with CPCs, lecturers, nurses, midwives and other colleagues within multi-professional services to enable students to achieve identified learning outcomes.

7.2 Clinical Placement Co-ordinator (CPC) responsibilities

The CPC provides guidance, support, facilitation and monitoring of the practice-based learning of undergraduate students during practice placement. The CPC ensures that all the requirements of the education programme are met by the practice placement in accordance with local policy.

The CPC is required to:

- Regularly liaise with the Preceptor/Associate Preceptors to discuss the progress of students.
- Provide support and guidance to the Preceptor/Associate Preceptor to ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve the required learning outcomes and competences.
- Provide support and guidance to the student to ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve the required learning outcomes and competences of the practice placement.
- Ensure that the student has been assigned a Preceptor/ Associate Preceptor/Supervisor, in line with NMBI standards and requirements.
- Liaise with Link Academic Staff, as required, in line with HEI policies and procedures.

7.3 Link Lecturer

Support Role: Link Lecturer (General; Intellectual Disability, Mental Health; Children's and General Integrated, Midwifery)

Support Role: Link Lecturer

The link lecturer is a member of academic staff, who maintains a link and liaises with identified practice areas. While the link lecturer will not routinely visit students on placement, the link lecturer role is integral to the overall provision of practice placement experiences for students undertaking the BSc Programme.

Specific Roles and Responsibilities of Link Lecturer:

- To link to named clinical placement areas.
- To act as a resource for students, preceptors and Clinical Placement Co-ordinators (CPC) attached to linked placement area, particularly in using Clinical Assessment Documents.
- To be available by telephone or email to address clinical learning queries specific to students in their allocated placement area.
- To meet with students to review their progress in achieving clinical learning competencies and to support their learning in practice as required.
- To attend additional meetings as required with students and relevant clinical staff in the event of learning issues arising for example, additional support required for a student; processing a supportive learning plan and follow up.
- To liaise with clinical colleagues in the facilitation and completion of clinical learning environment audits.

8. POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

There are several BSc Policies, Guidelines and Procedures which relate specifically to clinical practice placements for BSc Nursing and Midwifery students, and these are readily available on the SoNM website, please see clinical related documents at this link under heading Practice Placement Policies,

Procedures and Guidelines:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bscnursemid/>.

Students are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with these policies, procedures and guidelines for more specific details, guidance and direction on various aspects of the BSc programme.

REFERENCES

Government of Ireland (1998). *Report of the Commission on Nursing: A Blueprint for the Future*. Government of Ireland, Stationery Office, Dublin.

Government of Ireland (2000). *Nursing Education Forum: A Strategy for a Pre-registration Nursing Education Degree Programme*. Government of Ireland, Stationery Office, Dublin.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2025) Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives Incorporating the Scope of Practice and Professional Guidance, NMBI. Dublin.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2020) National Quality Clinical Learning Environment Audit Tool. NMBI, Dublin.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2023). *Requirements and Standards for Nurse Registration Education Programmes*. NMBI, Dublin.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2016). *Requirements and Standards for the Midwife Registration Education Programme*. NMBI, Dublin.