



**Catherine McAuley School of Nursing and Midwifery  
University College Cork  
&  
Participating Health Service Providers**

# **CLINICAL PRACTICE PLACEMENT GUIDELINES**

**BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery Undergraduate  
Students**

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***While every effort has been made to ensure that the guidelines contained within are accurate, the content is issued as a guide only.***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Clinical practice placement forms an integral part of the BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery programmes. Practice placement represents 50% of the undergraduate nursing programme and the development of skills, knowledge, professional behaviour and attitudes represents a key component in the undergraduate nursing students' attainment of competence to practice as a registered nurse" (NMBI 2016). 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/development co-ordinators, allocation liaison officers, link lecturers, 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 are also advised to contact relevant personnel for more detailed information and guidance if they are unsure about certain aspects of their clinical practice placement.

## 2. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>AO:</b>	Allocations Officer
<b>ALO:</b>	Allocation Liaison Officer
<b>BH:</b>	Bank Holiday
<b>CAD</b>	Competency Assessment Document
<b>CAT</b>	Competency Assessment Tool
<b>CNM/CMM:</b>	Clinical Nurse Manager/Clinical Midwifery Manager
<b>CPC:</b>	Clinical Placement Co-ordinator
<b>CDC:</b>	Clinical Development Co-ordinator
<b>DOHC:</b>	Department of Health and Children
<b>DON/DOM:</b>	Director of Nursing/Director of Midwifery
<b>GP:</b>	General Practitioner
<b>HSP:</b>	Health Service Provider
<b>LL:</b>	Link Lecturer
<b>NMBI:</b>	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
<b>NPDC/MPDC:</b>	Nurse Practice Development Co-ordinator/Midwifery Practice Development Co-ordinator
<b>OHD:</b>	Occupational Health Department
<b>PREP</b>	Protected Reflection Education on Practice
<b>SLP:</b>	Supportive Learning Plan
<b>SoNM:</b>	School of Nursing and Midwifery
<b>UCC:</b>	University College Cork

### 3. PRACTICE PLACEMENTS

#### 3.1 General Information

Clinical practice placements must meet the Requirements and Standards for Nurse Registration Education Programmes <https://www.nmbi.ie/Education/Standards-and-Requirements/Nurse-Registration-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 General (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 81 weeks and 84 weeks respectively of clinical practice placement. Students on the Children's and General Integrated Nursing programme are required to complete 95 weeks of clinical practice placement to meet NMBI and programme requirements. 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 or night duty, as stipulated by the custom and practice of the clinical placement area. Students must complete at least one night duty shift during their programme of study 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.

**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	48	36	84

### 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 HSP; year of programme; level of learning; responsibilities for learning; clinical assessment recording and assist with identifying competencies as well as associated skills relevant to the placement area if appropriate. 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, mandatory and essential skills that all students must complete in order 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. HSPs and the SoNM must be satisfied that students have completed the following:

- Garda Vetting (and international police clearance as relevant)
- Fitness to Practice Health Disclosure
- Mandatory Training Requirements
- Signing of Practice Placement Agreement
- Participation in the Vaccination Programme

**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.

### 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 and three), 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 AO. Nursing students must record the content of their reflective time (5 hours for each week) in their Clinical Assessment Document. Please refer to the Clinical Assessment Document/Tool for more specific information on reflection notes and reflective time <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bscnursemid/>.

### 3.5 Attendance in Clinical Practice: **Supernumerary students**

Students must attend their practice placement as scheduled, which means being available for duty 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. If poor timekeeping persists, the ALO/CPC should report it to the Allocations Officer immediately. This may lead to disciplinary action as per the SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements [Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements \[Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements\]\(https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesprocedures\)](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/nursing/keydocuments/placementpoliciesprocedures)

[andguidelines/JointDisciplinaryPolicy.pdf](#). Students must not alter/swap or otherwise change the dates or times for a placement without the approval of the AO/ALO/CPC or the appropriate HSP personnel. 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 specifically want to gain an experience which only occurs at that time, or unless they are making up practice placement hours (to a maximum of 12 hours in any week). This can only be conducted pending prior agreement with the CPC, CDC, CNM/CMM and Preceptor. Students may only have a practice placement experience during one weekend (whole or part) in any single allocation.

#### **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 (see Timesheets 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 <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bscnursemid/>.

### **3.7 Timesheets - Recording of Clinical Hours: Supernumerary students**

The timesheet 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 and signing** of the timesheet and to request his/her Preceptor/Associate Preceptor to sign the timesheet daily. The student must return the timesheet to the submission box at G03 on or before the date specified on the timesheet. Only the original timesheet with the SoNM stamp will be accepted.

Failure to submit the timesheet by the specified date **will** result in the withholding of all clinical placements for the remainder of the year/programme. Students may also be subjected to action under the SoNM Disciplinary Policy for Students on Practice Placements Disciplinary

<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/>

**In the event that a student loses his/her Timesheet, the student must contact the AO in the SoNM and the ALO (HSP) immediately. The student will have to complete a new Timesheet.**

### **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 must be submitted to the submission box outside G03 in the SoNM. 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 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 be recorded as a "fail" at the examination board for the relevant clinical practice module. 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 and where clinical placement capacity allows.

**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 familiarise him/herself 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**

It is advisable to submit a medical certificate to G03 in the SoNM in all cases of sick leave. The medical certificate must be attached to the Timesheet when submitting to the SoNM.



Failure to submit a medical certificate will result in the absence being recorded as uncertified sick leave by the AO. 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 (greater than three occasions), the AO in the SoNM will alert the relevant Programme Lead who will make contact with the student to discuss the situation and take action as deemed appropriate by the Programme Lead.

#### **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. The student should familiarise him/herself 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 LL 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, he/she must notify the relevant personnel when he/she 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 after the relevant exam board has been completed. This is to ensure students make up the relevant hours and weeks in order 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 AO 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.

**NB. Supernumerary students must not attempt to make up time without the knowledge and/or advice of the appropriate personnel in the SoNM and HSP. If a student completes time without the knowledge and/or advice of the appropriate personnel in the SoNM and HSP, this time will not be accounted as make up time.**

### ***3.9.2 Recording Make-up Time***

After the relevant exam board and 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 this is recorded in the Timesheet and submitted to the SoNM. It is imperative for the official record of a student's clinical practice placement hours and their ultimate registration as a nurse/midwife, that hours/days missed (and when they are consequently made up), are recorded on the Timesheet and returned to G03 (submission box) for attention by the AO in the SoNM. The student must return the Timesheet to the submission box at G03 on or before the date specified on the Timesheet (see section on Timesheets, p.3).

Students making up time due to previous absences will have a 'make-up time placement' organised by the AO (SoNM) and the ALO (HSP) in their respective parent site (e.g. COPE, CUH, etc.). 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 and the student will enter a repeat year if eligible. Students will 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 AO (SoNM) and the ALO in their respective parent site (e.g. COPE, 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. Students will be required to meet their respective Practice Module Lead and will subsequently enter a repeat year, if eligible.

### ***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 as a result 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.

## **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): Role and Function**

The AO is responsible for organising clinical placements for nursing/midwifery students. The AO, in conjunction with the ALOs in the participating HSPs and other relevant agencies, 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 <https://www.nmbi.ie/Education/Standards-and-Requirements/Nurse-Registration-Programmes>.

#### **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. The Allocations Office room number is 3.33, located on the top floor of the SoNM. Staff in the Allocations Office can be contacted by writing, phone or email as follows:

Allocations Officer  
Room 3.33  
Catherine McAuley School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Brookfield Health Sciences Complex  
University College Cork.  
Telephone: 021 – 4901561  
<http://www.in the SONM.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/>

The AO 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. Audits of all clinical placement areas are undertaken to ensure that the placement area meets the educational requirements of nursing and midwifery students (NMBI 2016a; NMBI 2016b).

#### **4.4 Allocation Liaison Officer (ALO)**

The Nursing Education Forum (Government of Ireland, 2000) recommended that a designated person within each HSP should be given responsibility to liaise with the affiliated university in relation to clinical placement allocations. The role of the ALO includes establishing and co-ordinating clinical placements of undergraduate BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery students in clinical sites. This is to ensure that students receive clinical instruction as stipulated by NMBI (2016a; 2016b). The ALO assumes HSP responsibility for the placement of BSc Nursing/BSc Midwifery students. The ALO is responsible for the initial orientation of the student to the HSP parent site and the administrative activity associated with yearly student intakes. He/she also co-ordinates issues involving Occupational Health issues/requirements, vaccinations and payment of clinical placement allowances where

applicable. The ALO liaises and communicates on a regular basis with the AO in the SoNM and with other relevant personnel within the SoNM. The ALO must also be aware of the suitability of the clinical learning environment, in relation to the availability of registered nurses/midwives to act as Preceptors for students, as well as the number and skill mix of the allocated students. The ALO is included in any feedback arising from the Clinical Learning Environment Audit process. Communication and consultation with the Directors of Nursing/Midwifery, Practice Development Co-ordinators, Clinical Placement Co-ordinators (CPCs), Clinical Nurse/Midwifery Managers (CNMs/CMMs) and other relevant personnel are essential to the process. The ALO, in collaboration with the AO, monitors the attendance of students on clinical placements and organises the making up of time.

The AO, in collaboration with ALOs and other relevant personnel in the SoNM and HSP representatives, arranges the allocation of students to placement areas. The finalised allocations are distributed to the clinical placement areas as follows:

- via the local ALO in the respective HSP
- via locally nominated contact person in the case of external placement areas.

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 AO aims to display students' placements at least four to six weeks prior to their commencement. Placements are often subject to late changes due to a number of 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 AO 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.

The agreed placement allocations are also sent to the relevant Programme Lead and Practice Module Leaders. Link Lecturers can view all students placed on their link areas via the 'ARC Link Lecturer' website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/placementinfo/>. Link Lecturers have the facility to contact students via this site also in relation to clinical

placement visits or other relevant issues.

#### 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 AO in the SoNM within 3 days if they have a concern in relation to their allocation. The AO will consider each concern on an individual basis.

In some circumstances, if the CNM/CMM, Preceptor, CPC, Link Lecturer and/or student may feel that it is not in the best interest of the student to commence/continue a particular placement or a specific placement area, the AO in the SoNM and ALO (HSP) may organise an alternative placement for the student.

#### 4.8 Contacting the Clinical Placement Area

Details on how to contact each placement site can be located in the 'My Placements (ARC)' <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/placementinfo/>. By clicking on the name of the clinical placement area students will have access to 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 ARC. 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 AO in the SoNM or the ALO, HSP, who will then have time to address your concern **before** the commencement of your placement. Students are also required to make contact with the CPC/CDC assigned to their placement area, if there is one (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:** it is advisable that students inform their next of kin of the contact details of the practice placement area in case they need to contact you urgently during your clinical placement. It is also advisable that students complete contact details for use in case of an emergency on p.2 of the CAD/CAT [https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bsc\\_nurse\\_mid/](https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bsc_nurse_mid/).

#### 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. They can also answer queries about organisation and placement procedure. Queries on curriculum content or educational issues will be referred to the relevant academic staff member.

#### 4.10 Travel/Accommodation Allowance: **Supernumerary Students**

Under the terms of the Department of Health and Children (DOHC) Circular 9/2004, students on the BSc Nursing/Midwifery programmes are entitled to an allowance towards the cost of

transport to and from the placement site for the duration of the placement. For the purpose of calculating such payments, the SoNM in UCC is deemed to be the student's base location. An accommodation allowance is payable where it is necessary for the student to obtain accommodation away from her/his normal place of residence.

Each practice placement area falls into one of three approved categories for payment, and each HSP has a different procedure in relation to payment of the placement allowance. Students should familiarise themselves with the procedures in their parent HSP. Information pertaining to placement allowance is available in the Allocation Information section of the SoNM website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/allocations/pltravel/>.

## 5. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

### 5.1 Professional Responsibility

Students must adhere to the conduct and guidelines set out in their Practice Placement Agreement, NMBI's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics <https://www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance/Code> and all other practice placement policies as outlined on the 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 [https://www.nmbi.ie/NMBI/media/NMBI/Code-of-Professional-Conduct-and-Ethics-Dec-2014\\_1.pdf](https://www.nmbi.ie/NMBI/media/NMBI/Code-of-Professional-Conduct-and-Ethics-Dec-2014_1.pdf).

#### 5.1.2 Confidentiality (Inclusive of GDPR & Social Media)

In the course of 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 familiarise him/herself 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. All undergraduate nursing and midwifery students are required to complete the **Fundamentals of GDPR Learning Module** on HSEland <https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login>.

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. 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 and then the patient/client or family member by the student prior to consultation.

Students when engaging in **social media and social networking** must act professionally at all times, 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 are directed to NMBI's Guidance document in relation to social media and social networking [NMBI Guidance Document Social Media and Social Networking](#). Students are made aware that failure to comply with the above 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 with regard to 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 the Standards of Conduct in the NMBI Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics booklet for more specific details <https://www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance/Code>.

### **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 Link Lecturer.
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/Competency Booklet.

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.

### **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 initially discuss this with the Preceptor/CPC/CDC or CNM/CMM. The issue should initially be dealt with internally and should only involve the Link Lecturer in terms of keeping him/her updated, or where the student feels the matter has not been dealt with appropriately. If the student feels that the matter has not be dealt with appropriately, the link lecturer should make the student aware of the Grievance Policy for Students on Practice Placements, a policy jointly agreed by the SoNM UCC and the participating Health Service Providers <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), he/she should discuss this with the Preceptor/CNM/CMM/ CPC/CDC as relevant. The student may also discuss their concerns, if appropriate, with the Link Lecturer.

## **5.2 Personal Responsibility**

### **5.2.1 Dress Code**

Students should familiarise themselves with the particular 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 supports 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 helps 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 to be inappropriately dressed may be asked to leave the practice placement area, 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 Lead 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 kept in the student's locker at all times. 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/CDC/ALO and agreed with the Programme Director 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**

- Students must understand that if they have/develop an impairment/condition/disability, it is their responsibility to seek advice regarding the possibility that it may impact on the students ability to learn, to perform safely in the clinical environment, or affect their personal welfare or welfare of others. An appropriate person to seek advice from in the clinical setting may be the preceptor, a staff nurse or staff midwife, a CPC or ALO. It is the students responsibility to declare the impairment or condition on the relevant UCC health disclosure form

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/academicsecretariat/ftp/FTPHealthDisclosureForm2016-2017.pdf>

The student accepts that only through disclosure of this impairment/condition can an appropriate plan of support to reach required clinical learning competencies be explored.

### **5.2.3 Personal Hygiene**

Attention to a high standard of personal hygiene/cleanliness is essential. All students are asked to shower and use a deodorant on a daily basis, considering the close patient contact that is experienced while on clinical placement. 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 39-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, 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 familiarise him/herself with the relevant policies/guidelines and follow the appropriate channels of communication when unable to attend the practice placement due to sickness/other. Students are advised to submit a medical certificate to G03 (SoNM) in all cases of sick leave. The original medical certificate must be submitted to the HSP and a copy of the medical certificate must also be submitted to G03 in the SoNM, for the attention of the AO (SoNM). Failure to submit a copy of the medical certificate to the SoNM will result in the absence being recorded as uncertified sick leave by the AO. When the student is ready to return to the practice placement area, he/she must notify the relevant personnel when he/she 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 also submit a timesheet.

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

### **7.1 Preceptor**

Each student should be assigned a named Preceptor/Associate Preceptor during clinical practice placement (Government of Ireland, 2000). 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 competence (NMBI, 2015).

Where possible, all students will be allocated to a Preceptor. 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.

#### ***7.1.1 Role and Responsibilities of the Preceptor***

“Supervision, teaching, assessment and the giving of continuous ongoing feedback are incorporated within the preceptor role. The preceptor orientates and socialises the student to the clinical practice environment. She/he identifies the student's learning needs, plans the learning experiences with the student, demonstrates best practice and shares clinical expertise. The preceptor acts as an effective role model and plans continuity of support for student learning. Confidentiality regarding a student's progress must be maintained” (NMBI, 2015, p.8).

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. Clear instructions for Preceptors to guide the assessment process are provided in the CAD/CAT/Competency Booklet.

### **7.2 Clinical Placement Co-ordinator (CPC) and Clinical Development Co-ordinator (CDC)**

CPCs and CDCs are defined as “skilled clinical nurses/midwives [who] ... guide and support student nurses/midwives in assigned clinical areas and [who]... ensure that the clinical

placements meet the requirements of the education programme with regard to planned experiences and outcomes” (Government of Ireland, 1998, p.91).

### ***7.2.1 Role and Responsibilities***

#### **7.2.1.1 Orientation**

The CPC/CDC is involved in the induction of nursing/midwifery students to their respective areas of practice. The Preceptor will orientate the student.

#### **7.2.1.2 Support and Guidance**

The majority of clinical areas have an identified CPC who:

- Is primarily concerned with supporting and facilitating individual nursing/midwifery students
- Assists in creating and maintaining a climate in which students feel they can express themselves and seek support advice and assistance
- Provides personal support to nursing/midwifery students and acts as a student advocate
- Is a resource for registered nurses/midwives through the provision of appropriate support and guidance
- Acts as a role model for students, promoting confidence, guiding and advancing students in their understanding of professional etiquette.

#### **7.2.1.3 Education**

The CPC:

- Facilitates the student in the identification and optimisation of the learning opportunities available
- Assists students in the consolidation and integration of theory to practice
- Encourages students to engage in reflective practice and critical analysis of nursing/midwifery care
- Assists in the creation and maintenance of a positive clinical learning environment that enhances the students’ clinical competence and knowledge.
- Participates in Clinical Learning Environment Audits with the Link Lecturer and Clinical Nurse Manager as per SoNM UCC Policy to ensure an optimum clinical learning environment.

#### **7.2.1.4 Liaison**

The CPC acts as a liaison between personnel in the clinical setting (e.g. Preceptors, CNM/CMMs) and the SONM (e.g. Link Lecturers). Liaison between the SoNM and the clinical site involves curriculum development, learning objectives, student assessment and allocation.

#### **7.2.1.5 Student Assessment and Feedback**

The CPC works closely with the student and clinical staff to:

- Discuss the students’ level of knowledge and clinical performance with the Preceptor and CNM/CMM, as appropriate
- Review the clinical learning competencies with the student and preceptor
- Assist the student in achieving identified clinical learning outcomes/competencies
- Ensure, where possible, that each student is assessed by their designated preceptor in accordance with agreed procedures using the CAD/CAT/Competency Booklet.

- Assist with the formulation and implementation of Supportive Learning Plans (SLPs), as required.

#### 7.2.1.6 External Placements

The CPC may visit students on some external placements to provide support for students as well as clinical staff. The CPC also ensures that staff are aware of the learning needs of students and that the clinical learning environment is conducive to learning.

### **7.3 Link Lecturer**

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

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:**

- To link to named clinical placement areas. Access to link lecturers/ placement information for each clinical placement area is identified on the integrated 'ARC Web' system on the SoNM website. 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.

**Please Note:** Each student receives an automated email generated through ARC from his or her allocated link lecturer prior to commencing placement. Contact details for the link lecturer are included in this email and students are encouraged to contact their link lecturer as required. All students are aware that their link lecturers are available to them.

- 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 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.

### **7.4 Additional Student Support**

If a student requires additional support/guidance on any aspect of their clinical placement that may not be covered under the above headings, he/she is advised to seek support/guidance from the LL, Practice Module Leader, Programme Lead or Director of Undergraduate Clinical Practice Education, as relevant.

## 8. POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

There are a number of 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

<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.

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Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2013). *Guidance to Nurses and Midwives on Social Media and Social Networking*. NMBI, Dublin.

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Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2016a). *Requirements and Standards for Nurse Registration Education Programmes*. NMBI, Dublin.

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